

Crazy

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Summary: AU. Souji Okita is anything but sane. Chizuru Yukimura is anything but rebellious. Two paths intertwined & what starts as mere friendship morphs into something more...crazy. OkitaXChizuru

## 1. Chapter 1

\_AU. OkitaXChizuru Romance.\_

\*\*a/n\_:\_ This story has been waiting ever so patiently while I reorganize my life to make it's appearance. :) New story. Yay! Enjoy!\*\*

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><p><strong>Crazy<strong>

\*\*Chapter 1: Prologue\*\*

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><p>The sound of fists colliding against skin, grunts of pain and the scent of blood filtered through Chizuru's senses. Fear and shock held her captive, glued to the spot and rooted to the ground. She was afraid to make a movement, afraid to catch their attention.<p>

If she were smartâ€”or rather, could form a rational thought she would run for it. Head back towards her dorm sans personal items. Those were always replaceable. They were distracted and caught up in each other to probably not notice her if she did, but she didn't want to risk itâ€”\_couldn't\_ risk it. Chizuru didn't want to be a headliner on the next day's newspaper.

The hard sound of a fist hitting an object followed by the cracking of bone made her eyes snap back to the fighting duo. Was this a normal occurrence? She wasn't sure who she was more scared ofâ€”the

stranger who tried to mug her, or the stranger who was saving her.

Both were equally dangerous.

But she was lucky someone had been walking right at that every second, so she really couldn't complain. Things could have been so much more worse. Chizuru didn't even realize when or how the fight ended. Didn't realize how close the stranger who saved her was getting, didn't even register anything until she was staring up at her beautifully roughed up savior. He had blood in his smile and knuckles, his dark green eyes softening only a fraction as they looked down at her. There seemed to be sympathy in his gaze, but other than that, the edge was still in his eyes...like the adrenaline was still taking it's toll.

Yeah, he was definitely dangerous...and surprisingly, she wasn't scared anymore. In fact, she was mesmerized.

Utterly and completely, mesmerized.

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><p><strong>an: Just a little intro. :) \*\*

## 2. Crazy is, as Crazy does

\_ OkitaXChizuru Romance.\_

\*\*A/n: :) Enjoy! \*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Crazy<strong>

\*\*Chapter 2 : Crazy is, as Crazy does\*\*

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><p>Biting her lip, Chizuru couldn't help but run her fingers through her hair and then tug at the ends of it in a nervous way. She winced once or twice when she tugged too hard, stopped for a brief second, before starting the routine all over again. But what was one to do on their first day at college?<p>

Just a few hours ago she said her good-byes to her father and twin brother before she climbed into the taxiâ€”the one she insisted on so she wouldn't be singled out right away with her family's private driver. She didn't want to be known for her riches, she wanted to be herselfâ€”Chizuru Yukimura, student going for her Teaching Degree with an emphasis on Englishâ€”another thing she also insisted on.

Her father hadn't been entirely too pleased with her choice of major, but after much arguing, he relented, with high hopes of her changing her mind. Doctors didn't raise teachers, in his mind, which was why Kaoruâ€”her twin, was going to their father's Alumni school for his Medical Doctorate. It was another reason she decided to go a different path, being a Doctor just wasn't for her.

Now she stood waiting at the drop off zone for an ongoing of ten minutes waiting for her boyfriend, Kazama, to show up. He was the other helpful deciding factor to which her father allowed her so much more liberty than what she was normally use to. Her father knew the school was a very good one, knowing that Kazama was attending there gave him reassurance for her safety. And unspoken, reassurance that she would change her mind about her major.

Like her, Kazama came from a good family that was very good friends with hers. She had known Kazama since they were kids, and the moment she blossomed into a young woman he instantly asked her to be his. It was only natural, since they basically already knew so much about each other having grown up together. That, and she was in love with him since the moment her father introduced them. It was a dream come true to officially be his girlfriend, with practically 5 happy years of dating under their belt before he left for college a year before she did.

Chizuru was a little nervous, but very excited to be closer to him again. The last year was hard on her, since she could only see him on the holiday breaks when he would go back home. Even then, the time always seemed way too short. Now it was different. They'd be an actual couple without either of their parents, and sibling, interrupting their time.

The thought nerved her, but at the same time, she was ready for the new. She glanced back down at her watch, shuffling slightly to the side to make way for another freshman trying to wedge past all her luggage. Chizuru blushed and apologized, trying to quickly move her bag out of their way.

"Hey, hey. Manners for the lady?"

Chizuru's eyes instantly found Kazama's deep wine colored eyes and she smiled, her shoulders relaxed with comfort and relief. Kazama smiled softly at her before turning his stern gaze to the freshman who finally got by her without so much as a thank you. The freshman hesitated, unsure of what to say or do that Chizuru felt bad for him. She knew how intimidating Kazama could beâ€"add the fact that he was an upperclassman and he was formidable.

"No, it's okay, Kazama. I was in his way." Chizuru stepped forward and smiled at her peer who seemed relieved but still nervous. Kazama raised an eyebrow but didn't push it, instead, he waved off the freshman without another word to him.

"If you say so," He reached over and gently pressed a kiss to Chizuru's lips. She smiled and blushed at the public display. "It's going to be utterly fantastic to be able to freely do that." He purred softly. Chizuru wanted to agree, to say something about how much she missed him, or how upset she was with him for not showing up sooner but anything she had to say died on her lips.

Instead, she hummed pleasantly at him and he gave her a knowing look that made her blush. Swiftly, he reached down to take the majority of her bags before she picked up her remaining ones. "Let's drop these off before giving you a tour, yeah?"

Easily, she agreed. Beyond giddy to be spending time with him again.

Kazama led her to her co-ed dorm, which was conveniently placed only a block and a half from the actual school and only two blocks from Kazama's Student Council apartmentâ€”unfortunately, next door to a few Frats and Sororities but nothing she had to worry about, so he said. Downtown was another few minutes away but there the majority of what she needed was right on campus.

When she reached her dorm, which was on the second floor, the room was empty but her eyes jumped to the other bed. She had requested a single dorm, but was denied because of her major. Honestly, she didn't mind if she had a roommate she was just more nervous on the kind of person her roommate would be.

Would she be a party animal? A girl who slept and brought home all kinds of guys? A mean girl? Or would they be friends? Chizuru never had a probably when it came to making friends, but she that was partly because she grew up with the majority of them back home, not to mention her brother was a force to be reckon with otherwise.

Kazama hummed softly under his breath as he set her bags on the side of her room she claimed. His eyes also went to the other side of the room, "Guess you'll have a roommate," he noted and he glanced down at her. "Is that ok? Do you want me to try and talk to someone?"

Chizuru couldn't help but smile, he was always thinking of her. "No, that's alright. They've already informed me on my roommate and I've heard that they do a great job on pairing people up based on their likes." She shrugged causally, "It'll be fine."

His eyes narrowed slightly at the empty bed but he nodded, "If you change your mind, let me know." His eyes swept over the room and his lip curled with distaste just slightly, but it vanished just as quickly. "I would offer my place...but it's against the rules for anyone other than the Student Council to be there." He extended his hand out towards her and she instantly took it, her hand cupping and molding against his like they hadn't spent any time apart. Her fingers itched to lace between his, but he wasn't one to lace fingers...ever.

Kazama was not a big fan of public display of affection, much like her father and brother, but she was use to it. It made the times when he did that much more special and the once ache she had felt was not so bad anymore. She let him lead her back out of the dorms and out onto the actual campus, she hadn't bothered to take a tour since Kazama had offered to show her around himselfâ€”but she still memorized the school map before hand.

It made her feel a little more in control...or at least prepared for it. Kazama first started out with walking her through her class schedule, taking her from one building to the next. Chizuru was glad that the majority of her classes were mostly in one building and even the ones that weren't wasn't too far from the last one. She hated thinking about the possibility of being late, ever.

After that walk through, Kazama lead her to the on campus shops starting with the student apparel shop. The shop was large and filled with both text books and all things that had the school's name, logo or mascot on it. Chizuru fought the urge to buy a t-shirt right away,

but only because she knew Kazama was on schedule and she didn't want to detour him further.

As soon they left that shop, he took her to the cafe further down the campus where he did ask her if she wanted to buy a cup before they continued. She turned down the offer, but was glad he was mindful enough to ask. The next stop was the on campus cafeteria that had multiple options to eat everyday at nearly anytime of the day. If they weren't serving hot food, they had vending machines that held a whole lot of good looking items other than simple chips or candy.

Kazama explained how to use her school ID when at the cafeteria to get special offers every now and then, and that specific clubs had specific perks. Being the President of the Student Council offered him free drinks at the cafeteria for lunch time only. That and he explained to her how your Student ID card was also your monetary source to pay for lunch or anything else on campus.

Chizuru glanced down at her school ID that had been given to her the day of orientation and registration. The picture was surprisingly flattering for once, but she never realized how important the thing was until now that Kazama pointed it out. She stuffed the ID back with her Drivers license and sighed softly. There was so much to take in, but she was excited.

Kazama showed her to the library next, pointing out the different areas in the vast room. One section was devoted entirely to computer and research, another was simply tables lined up for quiet studying, the rest was shelves upon shelves of books. The library was very rustic look, even a little musky smelling from all the books. Chizuru couldn't keep the smile from her face, she could see herself spending a lot of time there.

"That concludes the tour." Kazama clasped his hands together, "Everything else is basically off campus just a short walk or bus ride away."

"Great." Chizuru sighed and leaned in toward Kazama out of habit, his body complied easily and he rested his arm around her shoulders. He was easily taller than her and her head came right to his shoulder rather comfortable. "I should probably head back to unpack now," She hoped that he would offer to help, or maybe even offer her another option, but he didn't.

Instead, he agreed with a quiet nod and began to lead her back to her dorm. Right as they passed Kazama's apartment, someone called his name and he stopped. A tall red headed, bulky male walked down the front of the lavish building that was the Student Council apartment. Chizuru knew that, similar to the Frats and Sororities, they held meetings and boarded all the members.

Kazama let go of Chizuru and stepped forward slightly to meet the other member, "Amagiri," he greeted curtly, "What's the problem?"

Amagiri nodded towards Chizuru briefly before turning his attention completely to Kazama, "Something came up and we've had to switch a few things around. I apologize for the inconvenience." His curt gaze drifted over to Chizuru and she ducked her head slightly. It wasn't

her fault, but somehow she felt it was so.

As the two discussed quietly, Chizuru lifted her gaze to the houses lined up along the street. Each one had huge bold white colored Greek letters placed out front. She squinted her eyes as she tried to make out the English written words beneath them but she couldn't make them out. Noises drew her attention to the house closest to the student council apartment.

It was a Frat house, since there was a cluster of men around the front porch. They hooted, hollered and laughed loudlyâ€”not caring at all who heard them. Strangely, it brought a smile to her face and she idly wondered how it would be if she were included on such simple but fun interaction. Could they really be so bothersome?

One of the laughing guys raised his eyes and instantly found her wandering gaze. The look, even from far away, stunned Chizuru. His eyes were a vivid shade of green, like the grass back home during the best summer daysâ€”unlike anything she'd ever witnessed before. The man tipped his head to the side in a curious gesture, before his lips curved up at one corner. The look confused Chizuru and she found her eyes quickly skipping away from his.

He made her feel strangely unsettled and she couldn't be caught staring at someone else with her boyfriend a few feet away. It's not like she was attracted to the strangerâ€”that was ridiculous, but she felt shameful for even letting her eyes wander. Besides, if the guy belonged to a Frat then he was most likely always on the prowl for fresh meat.

The thought unnerved her and she shivered slightly. It made her all the more grateful for already having Kazama. He'd protect her. He'd watch out for her. And he'd definitely keep dangerous guys like that away. Chizuru turned her attention back to Kazama and his friend, pushing the stranger right out of her mind.

"So you see. We need you to come in now." Amagiri tipped his head back and sighed softly.

Kazama nodded briefly, "Understood. I'll be right in then, thank you." Amagiri nodded once, turned towards Chizuru and repeated the action before turning and walking back into the house. Kazama sighed calmly and gave a slightly apologetic look. To Chizuru, it looked like all his other expressions but the pinch between his eyes was increased. "I apologize for this, Chizuru."

Chizuru stepped towards him and smiled, "It's okay." She reached for his hand and gave it a slight squeeze. "We were just wrapping up anyway. I can find my way back."

The hooting and laughing made Kazama press his lips together and narrow his eyes over his shoulder. He glared sternly at them before he turned back and nodded, half in thought. "I'll see you soon then," Kazama laid his hand on her shoulder and lightly brushed her loose hair back. Chizuru inched closer and stood on her tip-toes to reach his lips. Kazama bent down and complied, giving her a short and sweet kiss. Without a second glance or another word, he turned and walked to his apartment. Chizuru watched and waited until he disappeared before she moved. The laughter hadn't subsided from next door, but rather, seemed to have grown over the last couple minutes and despite

her best judgement, she glanced over at them again.

And found the green eyed stranger still staring, and still smiling.

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><p>Chizuru leaned back and sighed with complete and utter relief. "And that's that!" She grinned widely and took a small step back to admire her unpacking. The dorm room she was assigned to was fairly large, considering that there it would hold two occupants. It was roomy, even with two twin sized beds crammed in and two desks.<p>

The side Chizuru claimed had a cork board where she put up a calendar, photos of Kazama, Kaoru and her father and a few of her old friends back home. Majority of the things she pinned were of articles about her father or teaching. She had a few quotes from a few of her favorite books and very, very few pictures of her favorite bands.

Her bed had a soft pink colored bed spread with large flowers on them, her laptop and E-reader was plugged in and set up on her desk along with a few hardcover books she brought. Her clothes and suitcases were put away nicely in the closet and she even hung a whiteboard on the back of the doorâ€"she had read that it was a good idea for roommates.

Chizuru seated herself on her bed and smiled again. She was officially a college student now. A giggle escaped her lips and she couldn't help the surge of excitement that bubbled in her. She would have to call her family soon, to let them know she was settled in. Maybe even text Kazama, hopefully get dinner with him if he was free.

A soft knock on the door broke Chizuru from her happy thoughts and a very pretty girl, just a smidge taller than her but much more curvier popped her head in and gave her a mega-watt smile. Her eyes sparkled as she shoved the door open.

"Hello!" she cheered happily and entered, "You must be Chizuru Yukimura!" The brown haired beauty chirped. She rather abruptly dropped her multiple bags and rushed over to Chizuru. She reached and grabbed her hand, her smile widening. "I'm Sen, you're roommate." Chizuru gave a wry smile that Sen seemed to easily overlook.

Sen's eyes dipped and dropped over Chizuru's half of the room and her mouth dropped open slightly. "You have such cute taste," she mumbled with her ever present smile. Chizuru wondered if there was a time where she wasn't smiling, because it didn't seem possible. Sen leaned back and turned back to her side. "I'm glad your my roommate! I can tell that we're going to be awesome friends!"

At that, Chizuru couldn't help but smile back. No one had ever said something like that to her. Not that she didn't have friends, but having grown up with the majority of people in her neighborhood, it was a given to be friends. But this? This was completely different.

"I'm glad too," she finally added softly. This time she had to

disagree with Kazama, having a roommate wouldn't be a pain at all. It seemed like it would be nice, definitely better than being alone. Though it was honestly too early to tell if her roommate was a good person or not, but what could Sen possibly gain by being fake right away?

No, there was something good and nice about Sen that made Chizuru feel happy she didn't ask Kazama to help her out. The survey had worked wonders by pairing her up with someone she could get along withâ€”she only hoped it lasted.

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><p>Chizuru smiled happily when she spotted the text book she needed and pulled it off the shelf before she shuffled over to the next section. Before she even realized it, the girl at the front register called out to her.<p>

"We're closing in five minutes, ma'am."

Chizuru jumped slightly, a little surprised to have wasted so much time at the apparel/textbook shop. She glanced down at her cellphone and it blinked back 7 p.m. She pressed her lips together, scolding herself for not making more use of her time before she opened her text messages but found nothing from Kazama.

Her heart sank a little, but she shrugged it off. She understood he was a busy guy, but she had hoped for dinner. Now she hoped to at least get a call before the end of the day. Chizuru stuffed her phone away, grabbed the textbooks she found and headed to the front check out.

Earlier, she spent part of the day chatting with Sen while she unpacked with Sen constantly getting distracted from her packing just to tell Chizuru all about herself and then prodding Chizuru to tell her things about herself. After a few minutes, Chizuru decided that if Sen was going to ever get done unpacking, she should leave her alone.

Sen tried to convince her to stay, but Chizuru told her she had to get a few items from the shop, which wasn't necessarily a lie, but Sen understood. But before she left, Sen was incessant upon exchanging numbersâ€”just in case, so she complied. One never knew when they'd need their roommates number.

After that, she headed down to the coffee shop first, ordered a cappuccino with a banana nut muffin, and then headed over apparel shop. There she started browsing randomly, purchasing a few shirts to showcase her school spirit before she went and started with the books.

Chizuru gently laid her items out on the counter and offered the bored looking girl an apologetic smile. Quickly the girl rang up her items, packed them away and sent Chizuru quickly on her way. It was obvious that the girl didn't enjoy her job judging from the tight lipped smile and farce sounding 'Have a good night' she offered.

Chizuru didn't even take it to heart to be offended, she did overstay her welcomeâ€”accidentally of course. She tucked her purchases close



to her bag and started back towards her dorm. She checked her watch and grimaced again, how had she let herself get so caught up? The excitement of starting out as a college student was obviously the reason, but she was never one to zone out like that.

Chizuru paused and began to ruffle through her bag, remembering her idea to call Kazama to see if he was free for a late dinner. Her phone hadn't gone off once while she was out and she tried hard not to over think it, but of course, she did. She didn't even take notice to her surroundings as her mind buzzed, nor did she notice how someone was lingering too close to her. Right as her fingers found her phone at the bottom of her purse, she was pulled rather roughly into the alley closest to her by her purse as a stranger tried to take it.

Her automatic reaction when he started to pull was to hold on and her eyes widened when she looked up at a strangers harsh gleaming glare. He grinned angrily down at her and tugged harder, pulling Chizuru down to the ground and scraping her knees. She yelled out in pain before quickly pushing herself up onto her hands and knees.

"Hey-y!" Chizuru frowned and winced slightly, "He-elp! Someone!" \_Is this really happening?\_ She felt tears prick her eyes. It was her first day and she got mugged. The mugger paused abruptly and turned back towards her. Chizuru flinched and pushed herself quickly to her feet, she didn't like the sudden recognition in his eyesâ€"the recognition that he wasn't finished.

Her feet felt like lead beneath her suddenly trembling body. Her mind kept screaming to turn and run but the command wasn't reaching her legs and instead her legs seemed to tangle within each other. Pain shot up her lower back and palms of her hands as she fell backwards onto her butt. Her mouth opened in a scream that seemed to strangle in her throat.

\_Yeah, this is really happening. \_The thought was bitter and harsh in her head. It caused an unpleasant shiver to snake it's way up her spine and a sob got stuck in her throat. She wanted to screamâ€"needed to if she had any hopes of getting rescued. Instead, she raised her arms in front of her face, whimpered, and waited for the inevitable. How had she let this thing happen?

A cool breeze tickled the sweat that gathered on her forehead and the back of her neck, but she didn't hear his foot steps get closer. There was a grunt that made her flinch and keep her arms up. She felt an object hit her legs and she cringed, her muscles tightened with fear. Another grunt echoed towards her that sounded rather...\_painful\_ and Chizuru allowed herself to look up from her arms.

Her eyes widened as they landed on an unfamiliar backâ€"broad shoulders flexed beneath a tight t-shirt. His wide stance drew her eyes indecently to his lower area and she drew her eyes back up. Dark green eyes stared down at her from over his shoulder, the striking color vibrant even in the dark light. The eyes were very familiar and Chizuru gasped softly when she remembered.

The stranger from the Frat house.

He smirked, "You okay?" he asked, tipping his head slightly.

Chizuru stared numbly at him, her voice lost but she managed to nod slowly. What was going on? Her eyes skipped over his form to the mugger who was currently pushing himself to his feet. He swayed and glared hard at the stranger who was helping her. She didn't think anyone had heard her, considering how she hadn't yelled for long.

The stranger turned his head back to the mugger and he cracked his neck—an odd gesture that had Chizuru's heart beating quickly. She was never in situations like the one she was currently in.

"Do you know what I hate the most?" her rescuer asked her mugger. "Losers like you who pick on cute innocent girls."

Chizuru blushed and pressed her hands to her cheeks as a reflex to stop the action. It wasn't like he was looking at her or noticed, but she couldn't help doing it. But who said things like that? Especially when about someone they didn't know to someone they were fighting?! She bite her lip and kept her eyes glued to them.

Who said chivalry was dead?

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><p>There was nothing like the pure rush of getting into a fist fight. Often times it was like a craving, one that satisfied more than anything else in the world could ever do. The pure adrenaline that powered his muscles and sharpened his vision gave him a purpose, gave him the feeling of just being alive.<p>

He wasn't quite sure where it started. He could say it was when his parents died and left him an orphan. He could say it was when he started to jump from foster home to foster home during his early teens. Or that it was probably defending himself in the school yard against the jocks and whatnot.

Though honestly, he could just simply say it was always in him, because it was. And it was by chance that it turned into something he could profit from. Just as it was chance that he'd walk past the alley where he heard something that didn't sound quite right—but that was also because of his curiosity.

"You're fucking \_insane, \_man."

Souji Okita raised his head up lazily at the punk in front of him. With a quick grin he revealed a row of straight teeth covered in blood that made the guy flinch. Slowly, Okita raised his arm and wiped it across his mouth before he turned his head slightly to the right and spit his blood out.

His opponent grimaced, eyes glued to the glob of blood a few feet away from them. The expression on his face had Okita grinning wider, the adrenaline pumping through and fueling him. "Is that all you got?" he asked, tilting his head mockingly. He lifted his hands and waved him over. "Come on, man. I said hit me like you \_mean\_ it!" He gestured to the side of his face again.

The punk's face pinched with disgust, fists raised and shaking but otherwise not moving. "That's—this..." His eyes shifted from him to

over his shoulder and he shook his head. "Fuck this, man. I'm out!" The man was quick to pivot away from Okita and start sprinting away. Had Okita been by himself, he would've easily followedâ€"he wasn't one to just let the other run away like a coward.

Cowards pissed him off.

And with the adrenaline still pumping in his veins, he knew the chase would be thrilling. Subconsciously he even stepped in the direction the guy hurried off to, but his sharp gaze caught movement just out of the corner of his eye. Okita stopped and turned his head to the reason why he was in the whole situation to begin with. \_Her.\_

Okita looked down at the girl he rescued, her large brown eyes wide and her chest rising and falling rapidly. She looked like a rabbit cornered by a foxâ€"which seemed accurate, except he had no intention of hurting her. Despite what the multiple rumors that seemed to spring up every year, he would never hurt a female. Ever. In fact, nothing made him want to hurt the other guy more than the scared look in her eyes. It stirred something awake inside him, something protective. Something that surged through him more powerful than the adrenaline. He didn't think too much of it though.

He reached down, watching her closely and moving slowly so she wouldn't freak out. He reached for her purse and books on the ground and handed them out to her. He was shocked that she hadn't run off when the moment was right but rather had waited. He guessed she was in some form of shock, but she didn't scream or anything either.

And how odd was it that he rescued the very same girl he saw earlier that very day? Her wide brown eyesâ€"even though they were full of fearâ€"was still recognizable and had seized him the moment he turned his attention to them. Even from the distance they had been at, he could feel the warmth of them from the front steps of the Frat house. Her reaction to seeing him watch her amused him and he knew from that, that she was new.

Then he'd seen the Student Council president approach her and he knew that she was off-limits...but he wasn't exactly good at that sort of thing. The fact that he sent her off on her own said a thousand and one things about their relationship, at least it did to him. The girl's eyes lifted to his briefly, her warm chocolate eyes reminding him of a delicious cup of hot chocolate. Her gaze even warmed started to warm up his insidesâ€"it was a little off putting since he didn't understand it.

"You should really pay more attention to your surroundings, you know?" He furrowed his brow and gave her a stern look. He hadn't meant to start off like that, but the fact was that she could have avoided the whole thing if she were more careful. "Shit still happens within the campus."

The girl winced and nodded, "I know." She whispered softly, meekly. She ducked her head and continued to put more things into her purse. His eyes skimmed down to her text books and he couldn't help the smirk.

"English?" he asked, more to himself than at her. "Guess we'll be seeing more of each other than."

Her head whipped up again, nearly smacking him in the face but he backed up just in time to avoid it. Her eyes were wide again, wider than seemed humanly possible but it wasn't. Surprisingly, it only further made her cuter. Who did facial expressions like that nowadays? She wore everything she was feeling on her face through her eyes—he idly wondered what other expressions she could make and he quickly shook the thought.

Those thoughts were beyond inappropriate, especially now. But damn. She wasn't making it easy on him. Her eyes searched his, confused by his comment he was sure. He felt his lips tug upwards again, he wasn't normally the smiling type but he was finding himself doing it more with her than he ever had with anyone else.

Okita gestured to her text book, "Your book," he stifled the chuckle as realization dawned on her face followed by a bright red blush. "English is one of the few classes that are mixed."

"Oh. I see." She mumbled barely, her hands moving quicker to put her things together. Okita watched in utter amusement as she finally got herself all together and then pushed to her feet. His eyes noticed a dark wet patch on her right knee and he noticed the palms of her hands were bright pink as well. "Well, um, thank you and—um, I—"

Straightening his hand shot out and grabbed her from making a hasty getaway. Her eyes slowly traveled from her wrist up to his eyes—and he just about let go of her by the mere jolt her eyes caused as they trailed over him. There was something about this girl that was...different. He turned over her hand and furrowed his brow.

Briefly it didn't look too bad, but now that he stared he could see how scraped and raw her palms were. She winced slightly when his thumb brushed over a particular area and he cursed under his breath. Immediately her eyebrows raised, probably not use to such language.

He smirked, "Sorry." He dropped her hand and gestured to her knee, "Can I see your knee?"

She hesitated before she bent over and pulled up her pant leg slowly. Okita knelt down and resisted the urge to go after the douche who hurt her. He knew that she was one of the lucky ones—there were others who weren't so lucky to have someone step in, but she did get off easy. She would have wounds that would eventually heal.

He dropped her pant leg and stood up, "We should get that and your hands bandaged up."

The girl's eyes widened almost comically, "W-we?" she shook her head, "No, that's okay!"

Okita crossed his arms and gave her his best no nonsense face. What kind of girl turned down help like that? It wasn't like he was going to take advantage of her...as much as he wanted to try. "Don't be so quick to say no, you'll hurt my feelings you know."

She pressed her pretty lips together and opened her mouth to retort but he stepped towards her and she immediately shut her mouth. Her

head snapped up to look at him with those ever wide eyes, but she wasn't scared.

"Besides is that anyway to thank me?" he smirked down at her, tilting his head just slightly. "Because it's not at all nice."

"I'm sorry." She quickly told him, ducking her head and shifting to put a little space between them. "I didn't meanâ€"well, I mean I'm thankful! I am, but...you don't need to bother with it. I can take care of it."

Okita sighed and tipped his head backwards, his hand running through his hair. "Alright, yeah. Fair enough." He tipped his head back, "I mean what sane person would accept an invitation from a stranger, right?"

He watched again in amusement as she seemed to flounder with his comment and he reached out and absentmindedly brushed dirt off her face. She flushed prettily and he quickly dropped his hand, playing it off as nonchalantly as he could. \_What the fuck was that?\_

"I'm Souji Okita. Everyone just calls me Okita." He glanced at her hands, "I would shake your hand, but that's probably not wise." He raised his own hands to showcase the dried blood.

Her eyes traced over the blood before she tore her gaze away, "Chizuru Yukimura." She answered, giving him a small slightly forced smile. He noticed her hands twitch slightly before she gently put them in her jacket pockets. He guess they probably stung now that the adrenaline died down. Her hands were small and delicate looking, most likely not at all use to something like that.

"Chizuru, uh?" he nodded, "I'll remember that. You do best to remember my name too. You never know when it'll come in handy." Okita gave her a lop-sided grin, ones he usually reserved for girls at partiesâ€"he wasn't quite sure why he was using it now though. "Now that we know each other, you can't argue if I walk you back to your dorm, right?"

Surprisingly, Chizuru laughed. It wasn't a loud one, or even body shaking, but it was a small chuckle. "Exchanging names doesn't mean we know each other," she shook her head, "But sure. It would be...reassuring to be walked back."

Okita nodded and she told him where her dorm was located. Easily and much too quickly he led her back to her dormâ€"which was only about a block and a half from where she nearly got mugged. He hoped she would be okay when and if she ever got around to walking by it.

"So this is it?" he asked as Chizuru dug through her purse and pulled out her student ID to allow her entrance to the building.

She nodded, "Yeah," she hesitated, her hand on the door but she hadn't opened it yet. He watched as she fumbled around and he would've paid good money just to get an idea of what she was thinking about. "So, um, thank you for everything..."

Okita lifted his hands and backed away. "It's my civil duty to save damsel's in distress, Chizuru. Just another day." He winked and she blushed again, her eyes dipping away.

"Yeah, well, umâ€"bye."

"Remember to tend to those wounds," he reminded her as he walked away backwards. She lifted her head and nodded. "I'll be seeing you, Chizuru."

Chizuru furrowed her brow slightly in confusion, but nodded before she swiped her card and quickly entered the building. His eyes took in the building and he smirked to himself. He knew someone in that dorm since it was a co-ed building. Not only that, but they had one confirmed class together and who knew how many others as well.

It was going to be an interesting year.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>an: Yay! :) Just a start, but a strong one I hope!  
Please, Read and Review. Love hearing them! \*\*

### 3. Bad Man

\_AU. OkitaXChizuru Romance.\_

\*\*A/n:Thank you, thank you, thank youuu for all the wonderful reviews so far! :) I'm so pleased! Without further ado, enjoy! \_Rated Strong T for swearing.\_ \*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Crazy<strong>

\*\*Chapter 3: Bad Man\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chizuru did something she had always told herself she wouldn't ever doâ€"she lied. The moment she stepped into her dorm room, Sen was on her like she would imagine a worried mother would be. Sen's deep purple eyes were wide and if she wasn't mistaken her hair seemed a little out of place. She crossed over to her and brought her eyes to Chizuru's level.<p>

"Are you okay?" she asked, her eyes searching for any tell signs. "You didn't answer your phone and I got worried andâ€" Her eyes lowered to her hands and she gasped before Chizuru could hide them from her stare. Sen reached them as softly as she could and lifted them up, her bottom lip trembled. "What? How? Are youâ€" "

Chizuru gave her a calm smile, she had originally planned on telling her since she had no reason not to, but after seeing her reaction she didn't want to tell her. She didn't want her to feel guilty about anything or even badger her about the experienceâ€"she didn't even want to remember it much less tell it. It was bad enough that she had to see her savior, Okita again. He was just going to be a constant reminder of what happened and her lack of awareness to prevent it.

"I'm fine, Sen." Slowly she pulled her hands away and headed to the first aid kit she packed. The daughter of a Doctor was always prepared. Chizuru handed the kit to Sen who was quick to rifle through it. "Honestly, I just fell. It was very embarrassing, but I wasn't paying attention to the curb."

Sen's eyes widened slightly and her lips twitched, but she forced the smile away. "Oh, Chizuru! You're a klutz, aren't you?" She brought the antiseptic over and began to dab at her raw skin. She hadn't realized how much in pain she was until the whole experience had passed. The walk back to her dorm was the worst, especially for her knee. "You have to be more careful."

Chizuru winced at the pinpricks of stinging that shot up from her palms as Sen dabbed. "I know." She told her, trying not to show just how touched she was at the concern. They just met and she was already acting like they were best friends. It was almost off putting, hadn't her facial expressions seem so sincere. "I'm usually much more graceful than this...and aware." Sen didn't catch her implication, not that she would've known why she said it.

Sen let out a small sigh but smiled, "Good to know, also good idea with the first aid kit!" Sen put salve over her palms and then started to wrap them.

"Yeah, well, when your father is a doctor some of their habits become your own." She laughed softly and tried not to gasp at the cooling sensation on her hands. She idly wondered how the whole situation would be if she let the green eyed Okita help her. What was with him? Why was he so insistent to help her anyway?

"Wow, your dad is a doctor?" Sen whistled softly, "Guess things like this were no biggie than, huh?" Chizuru smiled and moved to roll her pant up. It was true, although it didn't happen quite often, the few times something like this happened to either her or her brother, their father was able to quickly mend. A perk, she supposed. Sen tsked softly as she bend down to put some antiseptic on her larger wound.

Chizuru dug her fingers into her knees as Sen wiped away the dried blood, which took two towelettes compared to her palms. The healing salve felt great on her knee and Sen was quick to patch it up. "There you go." She pulled back and put the items back into the kit. "No more hidden wounds, right?"

"No," Chizuru gave her a small smile, "Unless you count my pride."

Sen waved her off dismissively with a small laugh, "Oh, it's fine. So you tripped, it happens." Sen plopped herself down on her bed—her whole side of the dorm completely decorated. Bright colors, glitter, flowers and posters covered her side it almost made Chizuru feel like she didn't bring enough of her own personal items. But she was fine with what she brought, she wasn't a flashy girl like that. She liked simple. "One time, I was wearing these new pair of heels my nanny got me and, like, I was breaking them in at the mall—ha! I should've been smart about that," Sen glanced over at Chizuru and grinned, "I face planted right into the center water fountain in the food court—the food court, of all places! Right in front of my crush...god, it was horrible!"

Chizuru let out a stifled laugh and Sen grinned wider, "Sorry," Chizuru quickly apologized, blushing.

"No! It was hilarious, I'm mean not at the time, but now it is! But what I'm saying is it happens to the best of us and later, you'll laugh about it! Just be thankful it wasn't in front of a large group of people!"

Chizuru laughed weakly, "Yeah," she agreed before laying down on her back. The guilt came back at having lied to her. Theyâ€”or rather Sen, was trying to bond with her over something she thought they shared. But it was false and was that the best way to start a friendship? She bite her bottom lip and tried to push the negative thoughts out of her head. She did it so as to not worry her, besides, she was fine. Nothing really happened, it was a false alarm. A close one, but still, false.

So she wasn't really lying. She did fall. Chizuru closed her eyes and sighed softly. First day of college and she was already lying to friends, getting mugged and making friends with obvious frat boy fighters. Her father would flip. As would Kazama.

Kazama didn't call her back, but instead texted the following day right before Chizuru's first class of the day. Her heart did that quick little dip and her stomach fluttered like it always did when he texted her. She knew how rarely he texted, so each text was always a treat.

Sorry. Got held up yesterdayâ€”first day organization. Meet you for lunch?   

Chizuru tried to reign in her excitement, considering Sen was still in the room and she didn't want to freak her out by bouncing about in a giddy and what she was sure an idiotic way. She tapped her smart phone screen to life and slide her finger over the reply icon, quickly typing out an agreement.

Sen puckered her glossy lips in the mirror she had mounted on the back of their shared door before spinning back towards her. "You ready, Chizuru?" Her glitter eye shadow made her purple eyes pop, but it wasn't overpowering. She pouted perfectly glossy lips, "You sure I can't do your make-up?" she asked, tilting her head.

Chizuru gave her what she hoped was a convincing apologetic smile. "I'm good," She pushed herself to her feet and grabbed her backpack from the ground. "But thank you."

"You have no idea how lucky you are that you already have a boyfriend..." she pressed her hands against her flowy skirt. "I mean, there are so many cute guys around here! And that's not counting all the upperclassmen!"

"I suppose so." Chizuru gave a one shoulder shrug, but despite herself her mind jumped to one particular green eyed upperclassmen. She felt the tips of her cheeks start to burn and she ducked her head, hoping Sen didn't notice.

She didn't. Instead, she preoccupied her time with double checking her messenger bag for all her supplies. "Okay, well, got everything."



She turned and grinned at Chizuru, "So want to grab lunch with me?" she asked, tilting her head. "Since we're roommates, we should get to know each other more, don't ya think?"

The idea sounded great, it really did, but she already made plans with Kazama and...she didn't really want to share their time with another, as selfish as it was. Chizuru fidgeted slightly, "Um, actually, I'm having lunch with Kazamaâ€”my boyfriend andâ€”"

Sen lifted a hand in the air, "It's okay, you don't need to explain!" She winked at her knowingly, this time Chizuru couldn't hide her blushing face. "Do we have time to grab a cup of coffee or something? We can do a quick 20 questions or something."

"We have time to pick up something and \_maybe\_ five questions." Chizuru slowly flexed her hands, the raw pain from the night before was only a dull ache now and very lightly pinkâ€”her father's homemade healing salve worked wonders.

Once they descended the stairs to the side door, Chizuru lifted her gaze and nearly lost her balance right behind Sen. At the end of the block stood a very familiar body, his unruly and wispy brown hair was a dead give away as was his height. She knew if he turned, she'd be met with dark green eyes. He faced the other way, one hand held a cellphone as he talked, the other held a lit cigarette.

Chizuru could feel her face start to burn again as memories of last night popped up in her head. What was he doing there? Was he waiting for her? She quickly scanned her mind for any hint or possible words she could've missed where he said he would, but he didn't. So, what then?

Sen sighed and glanced back at Chizuru who quickly regained her composure. So long as she didn't draw attention to themselves, they'd be fine, right? "Oh, god that's one is definitely an upperclassman." She tilted her head to the side.

"O-oh yeah?" Chizuru slowly started to guide Sen the other way, hoping and mentally chanting for Sen to follow. Thankfully she did. "How can you tell?"

"Oh, I would've definitely noticed someone as yummy looking as him at orientation!" Sen laughed and cast one final look over her shoulder. "Wonder why he's over here for?"

Doing her best to appear causal, she shrugged one shoulder. "He was talking on his cellphone. Maybe he's just taking a break or something?"

Sen sighed, "Yeah, or he's waiting for his girlfriend." She rolled her eyes, "The handsome ones are always taken..."

Chizuru nodded softly and, despite her best efforts, cast a glance over her shoulder. He hadn't noticed them and she felt a slight pang of guilt hit her. If he had come to see her, to check that she took care of herself and that she was doing fine, she could've just said hello and been done with it. Instead, she purposely gave him the slip and for what? He was being nice and honestly, things could be worse than having an upperclassmen be nice.

She pushed the thought aside, making it a point to herself that if she saw him later, she would at least let him know she was fine. That was it. That was all. It's not like he wants to be friends, or anything. After all, she was a freshman who obviously an easy target to get mugged and he was a rough upperclassmen frat boyâ€”with a heart melting-panty dropping-experienced smile.

Chizuru shook her head. She wasn't helping herself out and she hoped that a cappuccino latte would be just what she needed in order to keep her head from wandering.

\* \* \*

><p>"Dude, fuck that shit." Okita shifted his footing and took an extra long drag from his cigarette. "Of course I didn't make her up, stupid. She's short, brunette, wide brown eyes, adorable as fucking sin and probably has bandaged hands."<p>

"Bandaged hands?" The voice on the other line asked skeptically, "What the hell, dude?"

Okita rolled his eyes, "Heisuke-douche, pay attention."

Heisuke sighed on the other line, "Okay, seriously, unless you have a picture this is not going to work! You're seriously describing every other girl here! I live in a damn co-ed dorm!"

"Heisuke, do your freshman pledge duty and look." He shook his head, turning towards the building. "She has to be inside still, I haven't her come out yet."

"You know this is beyond creepy, right?" Heisuke grunted bitterly. "And how do you know you didn't miss her? Maybe she's one of those early birds or whatever..."

Okita rolled his eyes, "Well then," He took one more drag of his cigarette before flicking it to the ground. "This mission is fucked."

"Can I stop looking then?" he asked hopeful.

Okita stomped on the cigarette, "Do one more sweep. Her name is Chizuru, okay? Brunette, short, brown eyes and cute."

"I thought you said she was 'adorable' beforehand."

"Get on with it, ass. I'm losing my patience." He bit back, fingers already itching to light another cigarette. He wasn't sure why he was so antsy to see her again, but he kept convincing himself that it was only to make sure she did what she said she'd do. Despite what floated around about him, he didn't like leaving her hurt without tending to her.

He couldn't lie, he was up practically all night wondering about her. No girl had ever done that to him. Once again, he just chalked it up to leaving things unfinished. He may not seem like it, or even really admit it, but he was a gentlemen...when he needed to be.

Okita knew that he would see her, probably, somewhere on campus before class, but it wasn't like he could just talk to her through

class. She didn't seem the type to want to blow off class like that, especially since she was a freshman.

"Still think this is creepy, even for you." Heisuke mumbled, snapping Okita from his thoughts.

"Fuck you." He cursed, "It's a long story that you don't need to know. Hurry up." With that, he hung up and stuffed his phone back into his pocket. He glanced up at the building before glancing at the wandering students milling about. Okita huffed lightly and dragged the heels of his palm into his eyes.

\_It's way too early for this.\_ He thought gruffly. He skipped breakfast at the frat house to get a 'start' on the day. Which meant he also skipped his morning cup of coffee, which meant he was slightly more on edge than normal. "Fuck it." He cursed, digging into his front pocket for another cigarette.

His finger easily flicked his lighter on and the smooth menthol taste of his cigarette filled him and instantly relaxed him. Okita blew out the smoke and licked his lips. He didn't normally smoke—in fact, he sort of hated the stink it gave him afterwards, but he did always carry a pack on him for those moments. If anything, he was addicted to the motions of smoking rather than smoking itself. He admitted it, he was a complicated creature of odd habits.

It was usually what women lining themselves up for a piece of him. That and, well, he was quite a catch. Plus, in the underground, he was wildly popular with a series of consecutive wins under his belt and his brutality. Not to mention he was part of one of the most popular frats on campus with a rather wild reputation as a lady's man. Mix all that up, and he was quite the 'eligible bachelor,' regardless of the trail of broken hearts behind him. That's one rumor about him he was willing to agree upon.

He was, indeed, a man whore. But was that really such a big deal? His frat brothers didn't think so and quite frankly, he didn't see a problem with it either. He was always up front and honest with everyone that came face to face with him—and he did have standards. Like no stage 5 clingers, which one would think would be obvious, but it really wasn't.

Spotting that sort of thing took talent—one that he severely lacked, especially when drunk.

Okita raised his head just as Heisuke came trotting out the side doors with no one. He instantly scowled at him and he flicked his half done smoke at the freshman. Heisuke scrunched up his face and dodged it swiftly.

"Sorry, dude." He shrugged, not looking sorry at all. "I asked around but no one knows of her. But then again, it is only the \_first\_ day. Give it a week, tops."

Okita scoffed and turned away, "Whatever." He kicked his backpack upwards and threw it over his shoulder, nearly smacking Heisuke in the face.

"Hey, don't get pissy with me!" he whined, falling into step next to him. "Why didn't you just get her number if you're so interested Mr.

Casanova?" Heisuke gave Okita a wide smirk.

"It's a long story." He simply answered, refusing to indulge him, but damn if he wasn't itching for another smoke already. That, or to get into a fist fight. What was with him?

"Uh, yeah, sure it is." Heisuke ran a hand through his choppy light brown hair and shrugged. "Still a bit creepy though..."

Okita rolled his eyes, "You know, you're awfully mouthy for a fucking freshman pledge. Do you want to be stuck on shit duty?" he asked, quirking an eyebrow in an annoyed manner.

Heisuke grimaced and lifted his hands, "Whoa-whoa! Let's not get hasty here, ok? It's a joke, calm your shit." He rearranged his backpack and quickened his step to keep up with Okita's long strides. "Geezus, just because all of you guys are older than me doesn't mean you can just boss me around!"

"Actually it does, dip-shit. This ain't high school anymore. Things are different now."

"Yeah, yeah." Heisuke rolled his eyes this time and stuffed his hands into his pocket. "Now you're this big bad ass"and damn, if the girls here aren't fucking hot as hell!" Heisuke's eyes widened and his mouth dropped slightly in awe as two sophomore girls in tight jeans and low cut shirts passed by them, giggling to each other.

Okita casually winked at the passing girls who only giggled louder and he nudged Heisuke as soon as they rounded the corner. "Come on, you dip. Don't go doing that." He scowled, "See, this is the reason why we boss you around, dumbass. Not because you're a freshman pledge."

Heisuke snorted and ducked his blushing face. "Shut up!" Okita only laughed in response.

\* \* \*

><p>"Okay, so the line was longer than I originally thought"but don't think that means we aren't going to do 20 questions<em>later<em>, Chizuru!" Sen raised her cup of coffee and winked at her, "I'll see ya back at the dorm!"

Chizuru lifted her own large cup in a silent agreement, slightly glad that they didn't have the time to sit and talk. She wasn't sure she was quite comfortable to lay out all there was to know about herself. She watched as Sen walked out of view before she turned towards her first class. Slowly and gingerly, she rearranged the cup so the sleeve rested against her palms before she sipped away at her latte.

With just a few sips, her eyes seemed to widen and her vision seemed to sharpen everything. The caffeine was zipping through her veins and she hummed pleasantly. She could definitely get use to that every morning. If there was anything she picked up from her father, it was definitely his taste for caffeinated drinks. Coffee and lattes were her vice.

Quickly, Chizuru made her way back towards the school since her class was going to start in five minutes. With her knee aching, it made moving faster a little more painful but she managed to arrive with a few minutes to spare. The classroom was large and raised, the desk at the front of the classroom was empty and she was glad the Professor wasn't in yet.

Her eyes quickly skimmed the desks that were empty as she quickly tried to determine where to sit. If she sat way up at the back, then it made it hard to hear and made it seem like she wasn't too interested. But if she sat up in the front row, it made her seem like she was aiming to be a teachers petâ€”right? All that left was the middle row, which was thankfully relatively empty.

The steps up toward her seat pulled at her knee in ways that had her wincing and at the last second changed from shuffling into the middle seat to the one right by the stairs. For the next couple days she needed something easily accessible, not something that would prolong her healing.

Within minutes, the classroom started to fill up and the room started to buzz with voices of upperclassmen who allâ€”not surprisinglyâ€”took the majority of the back seats and freshman with nervous glances took the majority of the front row ones. Only a few shimmied past her to get to the middle row and she let her eyes wander.

Most of the students walked in with a friend, but a handful walked in alone and she wondered if she looked as mousy, helpless and nervous as they did. An older gentlemen finally appeared in the front of the classroom and he smiled kindly up at the now nearly full class. He raised his hands and all the buzzing stopped immediately.

"Good morning," he greeted, walking around the desk to stand in front of the class. "I'm Professor Genzaburou Inoue. You may call me Inoue and this is Englishâ€”"

The Professor cut himself off and he turned his attention toward the door as a student entered the room late. Chizuru instantly felt sympathetic for whomever it was, as dozens of eyes zeroed in on whomever it was but that sympathy died instantly as her heroic brawler came into view.

He didn't seem frazzled or upset at being the center of attention or walking in late. Instead, he seemed to shine under all the attention and he grinned lazily at the professor. The girls nearby Chizuru started to whisper excitedly and the upperclassmen at the top of the class began to snicker while Chizuru felt a confusing mix of dread and excitement bubble inside her.

Professor Inoue tipped his head to the side, his smile never once faltering. "Ah, Mr. Okita, pleasure to have you here."

Okita shrugged in what Chizuru could only describe as absolute laziness. How could someone seem so unperturbed or casual? She pressed her lips togetherâ€”she had said she would thank him when she saw him next but she didn't think it'd be so soon and now, she wasn't sure she even wanted to. There was something about him that seemed...off. Last night she didn't think much of it because, well, she wasn't thinking clearly. Adrenaline does that to people.

There was something in his eyes, but she had tried not to stare too much last night. And even though he wasn't looking at her, hadn't noticed her, she vividly remember the depth and the unknown that was in his eyes. They were so unlike any she had ever seen before...and she admitted they were sort of magnetic.

Giggling shook her from her sudden wayward thoughts and she grimaced. Of \_course\_ she thought his eyes were magnetic, he did save her so she was obviously trying to find something likable about himâ€"not that it was hard to do. But he was the type to 'rescue damsels' as he had put it.

\_Kazama's eyes are better.\_ She thought vainly, chewing on her bottom lip. But a small annoying voice in the back of her head reminded her that at least Okita's had life to them.

"You know me, Professor. I always like to keep things lively." Okita nudged him and the Professor shook his head lightly before gesturing towards the desks.

"Yes, but you should keep in mind to arrive to class on time this time aroundâ€"less we want a repeat of last year?" Okita waved him off casually again. "Find a seat, Mr. Okita. Thank you."

When Okita turned towards the classroom, the buzzing grew louder and Chizuru sucked in a sharp breath. All it took was one glance exchanged between bright green eyes and her brown eyes to have her heart start sprinting. Quickly she ducked her head and hoped he hadn't seen herâ€"as stupid as that thought was.

\_Maybe he doesn't remember you\_. She thought encouragingly, but a small pang of hurt zinged through her and her hand automatically grazed her injured knee. He had been standing outside her dorm, but really, he could've been waiting for \_anyone\_. She couldn't fool herself and say he was waiting for herâ€"besides, she had a boyfriend and thoughts like the one she was entertaining was dangerous.

She was happy. She was in love. She was in a good place in her life. She was...

"Hey, Yukimura." His voice was deep and hushed as he whispered and they caressed her. He was like a walking billboard for all things...heart pounding.

She was in \_so\_ much trouble.

Okita easily slide into the open seat next to her and she tried hard to keep her eyes locked on their professorâ€"but he seemed so far away and distant, not at all like he was just a minute ago. She strained to hear him, but she couldn't over the sound of her roaring heart. What was she going to do now?

Slowly, Okita leaned towards her and she flinched. What was he doing? He poked her arm with the eraser of his pencil, "Hey," he whispered again, a little louder. Chizuru glanced everywhere but at him. Heads whipped aroundâ€"mostly female, wherever her eyes landed and she furrowed her brow. Was it just her, or was everyone staring at them? Or rather, a more accurate question would be was every female glaring at her?

Her mind was busy with her noisy thoughts that she didn't even notice when Okita placed himself right next to her desk until he tugged on the end of her ponytail and spoke again directly into her ear.  
"\_Hey,\_"

This time Chizuru didn't have a choice but to look at him since he held her by her hairâ€"gently, but still embarrassing. In a flash, her face burned bright as she stared right into green eyes. He was crouched right next to her desk, making his face completely level with hers. His eyes this time were darker than they had been beforeâ€"was he mad?

His eyebrows were slightly pinched and his lips were pulled into a slight scowl, but other than that, he didn't seem outrageous upset at her. She gave him a nervous smile and automatically tried to put a little distance between them, but immediately was reminded she couldn't. Her eyes skipped down to his hand and then up to his eyes again.

"Uhâ€"um, hi." She whispered lamely, her face burning brighter.

Okita's scowl disappeared and was replaced with a wide smirk. So, he couldn't have been too mad or upset at her. He leaned back on his heels and slowly let his fingers sift through her ponytailâ€"releasing his hold. The ends of her hair curled slightly as they fell to her shoulder and they felt warm against her skin.

He opened his mouth to speak when the Professor's loud voice drew their attention from the front of the room. "Mr. Okitaâ€"\_please\_ refrain from flirting during class. I know it's the first day, but it's still pertinent for you to pay attention." The Professor's eyes drifted over to Chizuru, as did just about everyone else's in the classroom, and she held the urge to hide her mortified face into her arms or to even dart out of the classroom. He gave her an understanding look, as if he knew without her saying anything that it wasn't her fault. "Anyway, as I was saying before..."

Okita slowly moved back to his seat, but purposely slide his desk a smidge closer to Chizuru's. Trying hard, Chizuru once again attempted to listen to what her professor was saying about their class. The girl in front of Chizuru turned towards her, gave her a quick once over and sneer before she handed her a pile of the English class syllabus.

The look confused Chizuru, but she ignored it easily before she grabbed her copy and handed the pile onto Okita. For the moment, he was behaving, but she wasn't sure what else he would do if she tried to ignore him again. He made it embarrassingly obvious that he did not care if he disturbed class.

Chizuru sighed softly, yeah. She was in a lot of trouble.

\* \* \*

><p>So Okita admitted that pulling on Chizuru's hair was not the most...<em>correct<em> or effective way to get her attention. She was a freshmanâ€"one who he had no doubt was studious, especially if she was dating that prick Student Council President. But regardless, she was the type of girl who paid attention in class, even on stupid

syllabus day otherwise known as the most pointless day known to man. Or, in this case, upperclassmen.

But he couldn't wait to try and talk to her when class got finished. And he'd admit it, he was getting a little pissed at her cold shoulder when he sat next to her—"what had he done to deserve that kind of recognition? He saved her. He helped her. All he wanted was to check and see if she was okay. Not only that, but he was also late to class because he was looking for her. Not that he really cared or anything, but it was the whole principle of the matter.

Okita wasn't sure why he didn't just listen to Heisuke and forget it. When he'd see her, he'd see her. What was the rush? He wasn't sure, really, but he did manage to convince himself that it was his civil duty to check up on her. She was a fragile little thing, really and it was obvious that the Student Council President wasn't doing his part.

Regardless, he was excited when he had entered the room and spotted her seated peacefully blended in the middle row. It was a fifty-fifty chance that she would happen to be in his class and the odds were obviously in his favor. The upperclassmen—"some of his frat brothers, were located at the top and had tried to wave him towards them while a few females, some from sororities and some he wanted nothing more than to forget about were towards the front, had also tried to invite him to sit next to them with their eyes.

At least, that's what he hoped they were doing with their eyes because whatever it was they had done was just not attractive. Instead, he winked at them and gave a simple head nod to his fellow peers. He could always talk to either one later, he wasn't sure how soon he'd see Chizuru again.

He smirked as he remembered her bright red face when the Professor called him out—"it was even better in daylight when he could actually see and appreciate it. It was rare to find a girl who blushed so prettily and easily as she did. It screamed innocence and it was damn attractive.

Man if he didn't feel like such a creeper for liking that sort of thing, he did now. He watched as Chizuru dutifully took her syllabus and bravely looked at him before handing him the pile. Okita felt his lips automatically tug into a smirk. She had to be some sort of gift from wherever mysterious gifts came from, because she made it took easy to tease.

He leaned over and tapped the desk to gain her attention. It was more subtle and the Professor didn't seem to notice—"not that Inoue would really care. The man was pretty laid back and he'd take it out on him later during Kendo club if anything. Inoue didn't do anger.

"Sorry," He whispered to her. This time she didn't ignore him, instead, she almost instantly turned her attention to him. He resisted the urge to smile. At least she figured out that he wasn't opposed to making a fool of him or her to get his point across. He was a loud character in general, the faster she knew that the easier the rest would be.

Chizuru pursed her lips and tilted her head. Her eyes told him she



was confused about his apology. Which, was a miracle that he was even saying the word, but he had no problem apologizing to girlsâ€”especially cute ones like her.

He gave her another lop-sided grin and gestured to her ponytail, "For pulling on your hair, I mean." Dawning crossed her features and she lifted a hand to the ponytail before she shrugged softly.

"Oh, uhâ€”that's okay." She whispered, giving him a very small smile before she turned back. Her bottom lip trembled slightly and her eyes shifted uneasily, but she kept her eyes trained forward. The little jitters she was obviously feeling made him feel like the big bad wolf after red riding hood. But he didn't feel sorry about it.

His eyes glanced down at her open palms and he automatically reached over, earning him a shocked gasp from Chizuru. He hardened his gaze as he looked over her palms, they weren't as angry looking as they had been yesterday. Now they were a very dull fresh pink, nearly normal looking.

Okita slide his thumb across her palms and she winced slightly but other than that, didn't say anything. He gauged her reaction a little bit more when he added a little pressure but still it was nothing more than a wince. Then, before the Professor could call him out again, he dropped her hand and for once actually turned his attention towards the Professor.

He needed the distraction. Really, he just wanted to barrage her with questions that he knew couldn't answer during class. But how was he going to get her to join him? To talk to him? She was obviously uncomfortable and antsy around him, why, he wasn't sure. She hadn't been at the school long enough to hear all the shit about himâ€”even so, would she really believe all that crap?

Okita glanced at her and fought the frown. Yeah, unfortunately he did think she would. And why wouldn't she? Her innocence for one thing, makes her susceptible to bullshit and her stuck up boyfriend would surely back up any false claims.

He scowled. How on earth was he going to convince her to be friends before she heard anything stupid? Is that what he wanted? To be friends? He scowled again. What was it that he wanted? He didn't even know her other than she was a freshman and her name. Did he really need much else? His gut was telling him a million and one things about herâ€”all good. Not only that, but she could be fun even if it's just to tease her everyday.

The thought of making her face blush on a daily basis brought a smug and determined smile to his face. Before he even realized it, everyone around him started to pack up their stuff and chatter began to rise in the classroom. He swung his gaze to Chizuru who was already on her feet and patiently waiting for the flow of students to lessen.

Tucking his pen in his pocket he was quick to fold his syllabus and started to follow her. Chizuru glanced over her shoulder at him and he reached out to offer his help when a hand curled around his upper arm and pulled his attention away. Chizuru offered another small smile, her eyes darting over to whomever was pulling him back before she descended the steps.

Okita bite back the mouthful of swears that threatened to spill, only because Chizuru was still within hearing distance and because judging by the scent that was wafting towards him he could tell it was a female who pulled him back.

"Yes?" He bit out, with a forced and nonchalant look on his face.

The nameless girl didn't seem to notice, and he glanced over to see if he could see Chizuru. She was at the bottom of the steps now, her expression pinched and he remembered that she had banged up her knee the other night as well. The girl in front of him flipped her hair and two others joined her.

All three wore some Delta Sorority t-shirts that seemed two times smaller for their bodies, but they didn't look bothered at all. The girl closest to him smiled and batted her eyelashesâ€"he was sure this type of behavior was more suitable and far more successful during a party. Right now, it was just annoying him. He glanced back towards the doors, some of his frat brothers were giving him the thumbs up for talking to the girls.

"Is she your girlfriend?" she asked, tipping her head to the side.

Okita raised an eyebrow and turned back, "Uh, sorry, what?" he shook his head slightly. She couldn't get too far, so he needed to hurry and wrap it up. The girl smiled wider and stepped closer.

"Nothing." She puffed her chest out and ran her fingers up his arm. "What are you doing in an hour?"

"Uh, yeah." He winked down at her and pulled away, "See you then." With that, he turned and practically jumped the stairs before he started to search frantically for the familiar ponytail. His sharp eyes managed to catch something that looked similar to it and he jogged in that direction.

She wasn't going to just ditch him that easily.

\* \* \*

><p>"Hey!"<p>

The deep voice startled Chizuru and she hesitated, glancing over her shoulder. With wide eyes she watched as Okita caught up to her and as everyone he passed greeted him until he reached her. He huffed slightly and smirked at her.

"You actually stopped." He glanced down at her and she gaped at him slightly, more so embarrassed than anything else.

"Uh, yeah." She shrugged and started to walk again. "I figured it would be best to avoid anymore hair pulling." She mumbled.

Okita chuckled, "Probably for the best," He shifted and was quick to grab her books. Her hands easily let him do so, despite the fact that she didn't want him to. Her grip was still weak because of her palms and she inwardly cursed. "You shouldn't strain yourself." He added

casually, as if he were discussing something as simple as the weather.

Chizuru pursed her lips, "I'm fine." She urged, flexing her fingers and trying hard not to wince. Okita stared down at her with a disbelieving expression that should've infuriated her, but instead it just sent warmth through her. She raised her palms upward and examined them. "I put salve on last night and will do so again until they heal completely."

"I didn't say you weren't." Okita gave her a lopsided grin and Chizuru wondered if he had any other expressions—or at least what a sincere smile looked like on his face. "Can't I just help you out?"

Yeah, he could. She suppose she didn't see a problem with that. Chizuru fidgeted slightly. She wasn't use to being fussed over like that. It did feel nice though. Kazama, although he did, only did it when it was obvious for him to do it. Kazama never offered to carry her books for her.

\_Stop that.\_ She mentally scolded herself. \_He does do a lot for you. Besides, what's this guys motive? \_

"Why?" she asked, almost too quietly that she was sure he didn't hear her. She watched him closely for any signs of something...strange. After all, what kind of guy who obviously had no problem getting girls come after her? She saw the proof just a few minutes ago of just how popular he was. The glares and stares suddenly made sense.

"Do I need a reason to do some good?" he asked, an eyebrow quirking upwards and disappearing into his wispy dark brown hair. "Most people would say something nice like, oh, thank you?"

Chizuru blushed and opened her mouth to instantly apologize—of course he was just being polite. Isn't that what nice guys did? Did he have to have some secret motive to help her out? Especially since he knew what she went through? Okita tipped his head back and chuckled loudly.

"You make it way too easy, Chizuru." He nudged her gently, "I was just messing with you."

Instantly Chizuru snapped her mouth shut, "Oh." She hummed and tried hard to calm her flaming face. What was with her blushing when she was around him?

"I'm just checking up with ya is all." He glanced down at her again, dark eyes still sparkling with humor. "I also happen to think we can be good friends. You know, just in case you need more help out of a dark alley."

"Er—uh, really?" Chizuru paused and tilted her head. "You want to be...friends?" she asked a little skeptically. She wasn't sure why that surprised her so much. But she could tell just from him walking into class late that they were two different kinds of people. And other than being grateful to him for saving her and him being nice to check up on her, what else could there possibly be?

The thought wasn't a good one, but it was truthful.

"Is that so shocking?" he asked, furrowing his brow as the humor instantly died in his eyesâ€”making them hard and almost cold.

"Sorry, it's just..." Chizuru bite her bottom lip and shrugged, glancing down at her feet. "Ok, I guess it's is shocking. I mean...we don't know each other and, well, don't get me wrong I'm thankful for what you did but I don't need you to pity me." She stopped and smiled at him. "It's nice of you to make sure I'm good. I'll forever be in your debt, but you don't have to befriend me or anything."

Okita's jaw ticked slightly and she noticed his hands grip her books so tight that his knuckles began to turn white. Her eyes skipped up to his and she once again took notice of his hard his stare was getting. The look was definitely intimidating and she felt her heart start to pound for a whole different reason. If she was unsure of him being mad at her before, she was sure he was now.

There was no doubt about it. His green eyes were sharp and held a cold rage, the kind she'd never witnessed in person. Chizuru suddenly wished she kept her mouth shut. What was wrong with being friends? She frowned and racked her brain for something to fix the situation, to wipe the building anger from him. He was better when he was joking and non-serious.

"Chizuru."

Both her and Okita turned to look at who called out to her, although she already knew. Kazama showed up beside her and wrapped a lithe arm around her shoulders. Immediately Chizuru pressed her palms face down against her jeans so he wouldn't notice. She didn't want him to ask questions or find out what happened.

He'd want details so he could make the matter much worse than it was. He'd want to make it pressing issue to the school and then he'd tell her father. That was too much. She didn't want to relive it to her roommate, nor to him, or father, or anyone other than Okita. Ever.

Okita's eyes ticked down to her hands, then up to where Kazama's arm laid on her and his eyebrows pinched slightly as his mouth tugged into a deeper scowl. Kazama raised his chin slightly in a silent greeting, both men were at equal heights with striking but equally exotic and handsome features.

But where Kazama was tall and lean, Okita was a definitely more muscled and hard. Kazama narrowed his eyes slightly and tucked Chizuru closer to his side. "Okita." He greeted curtly with a firm nod. "What's going on?"

Okita shifted his hard stare towards him, his fingers twitching when Chizuru stepped forward. "Okita was just helping me out," She gave him a smile and gently took her books back from him. "Thank you, um, for everything." Chizuru wanted nothing more than to apologize, but it was too late now.

He didn't say a word to her, or Kazama, just stared as placidly as anyone can all traces of anger disappearing. It was surprisingly

worse than seeing him in a silent rage. So far, everything that she happened to notice about Okita was always...real, the placidity was not.

Kazama gently pulled Chizuru back towards him gave Okita a final sneer before he turned them both away. Chizuru hesitated slightly, feeling rude and off. She couldn't shake the feeling that she was doing something wrong and deep down she knew she was. Chizuru glanced over her shoulder, "I'll see you around, Okita." She gave him a smile and silently pleaded that he saw how apologetic she was for her thoughtless outburst. She wished she could've explained herself better.

Okita's eyes narrowed slightly before he stuffed his hand in his pocket and pulled out a pack of cigarettes and turned away from them. Chizuru frowned and let herself be pulled away by Kazama. When they put themselves a good distance, Kazama let his arm drop from hers and Chizuru was, for once, thankful that he didn't try to hold her hand. He would feel what she was trying to hide and she tightened her grip on her books, just in case.

"What were you doing over here?" she asked, trying her best to shake off her guilt. She was pleased to see him, but mostly surprised. Schedules were a big part of Kazama's routine and he wasn't normally one to deviate. "Not that I'm not happy to see you, it's just you only mentioned lunch." She gently touched his elbow before she returned it to her books.

Kazama nodded softly, "I had an opening and decided to surprise you." He glanced down at her, the faint smile pulling his lips.

Chizuru felt her tummy flutter and she smiled up at him, "I'm glad." She told him, trying to keep herself calm. "We're still on for lunch too, right?" she asked.

He nodded once again and glanced up. Kazama had walked her to her next class and she couldn't stop herself from smiling like an idiot. "Chizuru," He stepped towards her and gave her a stern look. Chizuru furrowed her brow, confused on why he was giving her the look. The look was only reserved when she did something he didn't like and it had been a long time since he'd given her that look. "That manâ€"that Okita, I don't want you seeing him anymore. Do you understand me?"

Chizuru reeled back, shocked and slightly offended at his random request. "Why?" She asked, frowning up at him. All traces of that fluttery happy feeling she felt moments before were completely gone. "Besides he was justâ€"

Kazama shook his head, his features pinching as he scowled. "That guy is a bad man, Chizuru." He straightened, "Bad news. You don't know half the trouble he causesâ€"troubles that I'm trying to get cleaned up around here, not to mention how horrible he is to nice girls. That good for nothing is a party animal frat boy who is constantly the bane of the Student Council's mission."

He raised his hands and gently touched her face, "Seeing him near you unsettled me, Chizuru. I don't trust him." Kazama bent down and placed a soft kiss to her forehead. "Please, promise me you won't go near him. Don't even give him the time of day. Alright?"

Chizuru was too stunned to really say anything, or to even nod in agreement. Luckily for her, he took her stunned silence as her agreeing. She was never one to disagree anyway, but everything he said didn't make sense. But what did she know? She was a freshman and she knew that he had to have some sort of reputation. The whole thing only peaked her curiosity.

What sort of trouble was Okita a part of that made him a bad man? What was Kazama trying to get rid of? And why was he the bane of the student council? Okita seemed like every bit of Frat boy that he was, probably some sort of player too what with all the girls that practically flocked to him after class, but was he really that big of a trouble maker? He didn't seem bad. Misguided, maybe, but not \_bad.\_

Chizuru wanted to ask him about, or even ask around about him but she knew that it wouldn't be a good idea. Maybe it was just smart for her to listen to Kazama, after all, he was always looking out for her. She forced a smile and waved good bye. Her voice was still stuck somewhere inside her.

Kazama resumed his stoic composure before he left her to go to class. Chizuru stared after him and bite her bottom lip in thought. Something was off about the whole thing. Her gut told her that. How could someone who took time out to help her when she was getting \_mugged\_ in the night in a dark alley be bad?

He had even walked her home, tried to walk her to class, helped her with books because he knew about her hands and he even tried to be friends with her. Chizuru paused at the doorway of the classroom and frowned as she remembered his help the other night. Nothing about him seemed malicious like her mugger had been, he had been kind to her, helpful and caring for a stranger.

\_How bad can he really be?\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>An: So glad you're all loving it so far! :) Please Read and Review, as always, love hearing what you guys think! And trust me, this story is just getting started! :D\*\*

#### 4. The Underground

\_ OkitaXChizuru. Romance.\_

\*\*A/N: U-u-update! Sorry for the wait, but I hope it's worth it with this extra long chapter! ;) Rated \_strong T\_ for language and references! Enjoy! :) \*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Crazy<strong>

\*\*Chapter 4: The Underground\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"Fuck, fuck, fuckity, fuck, <em>fuck<em>!" Okita resisted the urge to kick the brick building beside him and instead dragged a rather take of his cigarette. How could he have let her get to him this badly? So she brushed him off like he was nothing, like he had done nothing for her. Sure it wasn't the normal reaction he got from girls, but he couldn't help but take it personally.

And when that smug Kazama showed his face? Oh, he was about to lose it big time. Everything he'd ever wanted to say to the prick's face was on the tip of his tongue, but that would not have done him any favors in the future. That was, if Kazama hadn't already started spewing obscurities to muck up his character first. And if she had to pick, who would she believe? Her boyfriend or the stranger?

If only she knew the truth. But it wasn't his place to say.

Okita rolled his eyes and flicked his burnt out smoke. He reached in his pocket and pulled another one out. At this rate, he was going to have to buy a whole new box and he was going to be late for his next class. He tapped the brick wall with his balled fist and pushed himself away from it.

"Fuck this shit." He stubbed the barely lit cigarette into the stone wall before turning away. He was not going to waste the rest of his day at class—the syllabus could be found online and it was all the same bullshit year after year. He wasn't going to miss anything important. Okita dug out his cellphone and punched in a number.

After a few short rings there was an answer, "Yeah?"

Okita puffed out angrily, his other hand flexing. "A week from now. Find me someone." That was all he said before he hung up and stuffed his phone in his pocket. A week was still much too far away for his liking, but it gave him the week to put in some hours training first. He'd been slacking and Saito or Hijikata wouldn't be too pleased, but at least he was taking precautions first.

Selfishly, it was just so he could burn off some anger more than being responsible. But they didn't need to know that. With another angry huff, he walked back to the Frat house. He shoved the door open without a thought, kicked his shoes off with vengeance and stalked to the open living room.

"Oi,"

Okita plopped down on the couch and didn't even spare his friend and frat brother a glance. The tall brown haired friend leaned against the door frame and crossed his arms. His eyebrows furrowed down over his deep blue eyes, his lips tugging into a slight scowl.

"You got wax in your ears, Okita?" he grunted, "I'm talking to you!"

Slowly, Okita rolled his head towards his friend. "What is it, Shinpachi?" he asked in a clipped tone. He wasn't in the mood for anyone's presence. It was way too much to hope that the house would be empty—everyone's schedule was all over the place.

A smirk graced Shinpachi's face and he straightened, "Oh-ho.

Someone's got you in a shit mood, uh?" he stepped towards him and Okita glared at him. Shinpachi raised his hands in mock surrender, "Chill, bro. I haven't done anything to ya."

"\_What\_ do you \_want\_?" he asked, exasperated.

"Just to point out that you're home rather early." He jabbed his thumb over his shoulder, "Seriously, you were just on the phone with Sanosuke not even a minute ago and now...you're here." Shinpachi lowered himself cautiously on the edge of the couch and grinned. "Who did it?"

Okita narrowed his eyes again, "No one." he mumbled, "I just need this."

Shinpachi gave him a skeptical look, "Was it Heisuke?" he asked, "Or...was it that mysterious someone who had you up early today?"

"You talk too much," Okita grumbled pushing himself to his feet. "But tell Sanosuke to make it a challenge this time."

His friend chuckled, "Yeah, that really does convince you're not pissed." He shook his head, "But I'll pass it on. This could turn into our favor."

Okita rolled his eyes, "Isn't it always in our favor?" He glanced over at Shinpachi, "You know I never fail."

Shinpachi leaned back on the couch and smirked, "All the more we should thank whoever made you so mad. I mean, without them, we'd be poor."

"You could just fucking get a job," Okita suggested, already making his way out of the room.

"Where's the fun in that?!"

"You're just lucky I'm a sure bet, Shinpachi." Okita smirked, glancing over his shoulder. "You'd be shit out of luck any other way."

Shinpachi scowled, pushing himself up to his feet to follow Okita. "The fuck does that mean, dick?" This time Okita chuckled, easily ignoring his friends annoyed feelings. At least it dampened the anger he felt, or at least, distracted him.

His friend opened his mouth to say more but was interrupted by the doorbell. Shinpachi gave Okita a confused glance and he just shrugged before gesturing to him to answer it. Shinpachi rolled his eyes but trudged to the door regardless. A soft feminine voice answered and Okita felt his ears perk up slightly.

Was it Chizuru? Had she come back? The thought seemed preposterous and way out there to be a valid option, but it was what he hoped. Once again he scolded himself mentally for letting his thoughts drift to her. He'd been perfectly fine before her and he'd certainly be so afterwardsâ€”more so after the hopefully challenging fight Sanosuke could find for him.



His eyes slide over Shinpachi's shoulder as the vague face of one of the Delta-whatever sororities that was near them, stood in the doorway. Her eyes brightened as she spotted Okita and she rather forcibly pushed her way past Shinpachi. He gave her a disgruntled look before he closed the door, "It's never for Shinpachi, eh?" he mumbled before he gestured his approval behind the girls back to Okita before leaving.

Okita let his eyes watch his friend as he walked down the narrow hallway before they dipped down to the girl. She stared up at him, expectantly and he gave her a smirk. Really, he wasn't sure what she wanted or why she was there. Was it some Sorority Fraternity business? That stuff was more suited for Sanosuke or Saito. All he did was show up to the events—he wasn't a planner.

The girl smiled up at him and her gaze became heated. "I know I said an hour," she purred softly and suddenly Okita remembered. She was the one who propositioned him after class. Her hand slowly ran up his arm before coming to a rest at his chest. "But I really couldn't wait, I hope that's okay."

His hand slide down her side and he momentarily hesitated. This distraction would definitely last longer than joking around with his frat brothers and it definitely beat brooding with his thoughts. He leaned down and whispered, "Good call." Pulling her body to his, he led them towards the stairs.

That was the last thing they said to each other before they preoccupied each other with more mindful things.

\* \* \*

><p>Chizuru's thoughts involuntarily jumped back to Okita and his beyond angry expression. It was haunting her. She wanted to blame the guilt that swirled angrily in her head and was making her sick to her stomach—but she knew it was beyond that. Why couldn't she have been more nicer? More appreciative of the fact that he was being nice to her?<p>

Her finger nails grazed her sensitive palms and she jerked out of her thoughts right as Sen opened the door to their dorm. Her gaze landed right on Chizuru and she gave her that signature smile she was getting use to. Before Chizuru could even greet Sen, she abruptly dropped her bag and skipped over to her.

"Oh my god, Chizuru!" she hopped on the bed and Chizuru adjusted herself to an upright position. "You will not believe my day! It was amazing and—" Sen wiggled her eyebrows, "I've heard you had \_quite\_ the day too, Miss Yukimura!"

Chizuru's eyes widened and her curiosity peaked. It was only one day so far, what could others be saying already? She bite her lip nervously, "O-oh yeah?" she asked, hoping that she didn't know the truth. Would Okita have said anything just because he was mad?

Sen nodded fervently, but didn't look angry. "Mhm." She smiled, "I've heard you been seen coddling an upperclassman—and not just \_any\_ upperclassman, but one of the most dangerous and hottest on campus!"

Chizuru gave her friend a confused look despite knowing exactly what she was talking about. Dangerous? She thought. Is he really? Intense, sure, but she didn't think of him as dangerous unless you were a mugger, than yeah.

Sen nudged her knowingly, "I had no idea you knew Okita! I mean, god, he's practically a legend around here! Tell me, how is he? What did he say? People say that he was all over you and your boyfriend got in his face after class!"

Sighing, Chizuru shook her head. Gossip was way worse in College than it had been in High School and she wasn't about to give in to it. But now that she heard what was going around, she could understand Kazama's attitude at lunch. He had been especially stern and rigid, reminding her at the end of it once again on how it would do her good to stay clear of Okita. It honestly made her feel like she was talking to her father...

"It wasn't anything like that," she shrugged nonchalantly and pushed into a full sitting position. "He was just being polite, saying hi and all. We have a class together and he's seated next to me." She wanted to tell her friend everything on how he made a skeptical of himself to get her attention, about him following her after class, and how he wanted to be friends...and how she blew him off. But Kazama's words were still ringing in her head and she didn't want to disappoint him.

Sen pouted dramatically, "Really...?" She tipped her head to the side, "What I said definitely sounded better. Here I thought we'd definitely have an in with the Frats and their raging parties..." She shrugged and her pout morphed into a bright smile again. "We'll find another way in. I got my ways, but!" Sen shifted and bounced on the bed again. "Tell me about your lunch date with your boyfriend!"

Chizuru smiled, relaxing instantly. "It was nice," She fiddled with her hands wishing she felt as excited about it as Sen seemed. "Um, it was definitely new for us as a couple and he picked me up from class, we had a nice conversation before he took my to my next class." New definitely, but not as nice as she wished it could've been. Kazama had never lectured her over lunch before, that wasn't how she wanted to remember as their first lunch together at College.

"How romantic." Sen sighed, laying down on Chizuru's bed with comfort. "It must be nice to do that. It's been way too long..." She dramatically pouted and rolled to her side.

Chizuru fiddled with her bed sheets, trying not to seem phased about how easily Sen made her self comfortable on her things and on her bed. "So, uh, how was your day...?" she asked. Really, she wanted to ask more about Okita. What was so legendary about him? Why was he known as dangerous? But she didn't want to raise questions or draw attention to herself.

Sen's eyes widened and she popped up to a seated position again, "Oh, that!" she grinned, "Oh my god, so you won't even believe!" Sen squirmed happily and instantly launched into a retelling of her entire day from the moment they went their separate ways. Chizuru nodded and hummed at the appropriate times, when in reality she was just trying to make sense of her quick rambling.

"And he was totally into meâ€"would've so have continued flirting, but of course the Professor decided to start class right then." Sen rolled her eyes and giggled, "But we did exchange numbers! He's already texted me. Then there was this one other guy, who was wearing this Frat pin who was totally checking me out and he was telling me about all the parties they do! I can so see him being our hook-up in! I was even asked to pledge this yearâ€"I had debated it before enrolling, but now I'm thinking that maybe it'll be fun to do, ya know?"

Chizuru bite back the frown, but nodded regardless. If she decided to rush during Pledge week, did that mean that they would no longer be roommates? It was a bittersweet revelationâ€"good because she'd have the room to herself, but bad because well...she liked Sen. And with the sting of unintentionally hurting Okita was still fresh on her mind. Would Sen still want to be close if she were in a Sorority? Would Chizuru even want to be around her if she were hanging out with those kinds of girls?

\_It's only been one day!\_ She mentally scolded herself. \_You can't freak out. If she does go for it, you'll be fine. You have four more years to find more friends if this one falls through! Besides, you always have Kazama. \_However, the thought wasn't as comforting as it normally would've been. She tried not to think too much about it, since she was having an off day.

"Yeah," Chizuru chirped as nonchalantly as she could. "I mean, why not?"

Sen glanced over and smiled, "We'll see. Some of those girls are pretty bitchy...I don't know if I'd want to live with them. Now if I could shack up with the Frat boys though!" She nudged Chizuru suggestively and they both shared in a laugh. The relief rolled off Chizuru's shoulders easily, at least Sen wasn't in any rush to decide quite yet and she was glad she shared the same thoughts about the Sorority girls.

The ones from her first period immediately jumped to her mind and she idly wondered if it would've been easier to accept Okita's token of friendship if she were part of a Sorority. It wouldn't have seemed as weird to her if that had been the case, but it wasn't. She pursed her lips in thought and Sen rolled off her bed.

"Well, I gotta get myself some caffeine if I wanna stay awake and alert for my work out!"

Chizuru gave her friend a baffled look, "You're going to drink coffee before working out?" she asked skeptically, scrunching her nose.

Sen laughed at her expression, "Don't knock it until you try it!" she scolded but shrugged, "After a long day of classes, I need a pick me up otherwise it doesn't matter if I'm exercising, I'll just curl up right there and nap!" This time Chizuru laughed, easily imaging what she had said. It wasn't too difficult. Sen's face lit up rather suddenly, once again reminding Chizuru just how animated she could be. "Come with me!"

Chizuru slumped slightly and kicked out her legs, "I \_just\_ got comfortable, Sen." She sighed and tipped her head back. "And I have

to start planning andâ€" She trailed off when Sen reached down and started tugging her off the bed.

"No excuses, ma'am." She urged, successfully and rather easily pulling Chizuru to her feet. "It's the first day, you don't have to do squat. Besides, you owe me a speed round of 20 questions!"

"Okay, now I really am busy." She joked, earning her a playful glare from Sen. "Alright, I give in...is this a prelude to how all future haggling is going to be?"

Sen looped her arm through hers and started to guide her out of the room. "Mmm, yeah, basically." She grinned unabashedly. "I call it the No nonsense tactic. We cut through all the bullshit and just do it." Chizuru opened her mouth to add to her statement, or to laugh, but they were both sidetracked.

"Uh, excuse me ladies!"

They both stopped at the head of the stairs they were about to walk down and turned to stranger. The guy was just a tad bit taller than both of them, with startling vivid turquoise eyes and short spiky hair. His expression was soft and warmâ€"the very face of someone friendly, someone trust worthy. Chizuru felt herself relax and Sen tipped her head in question.

"Yeah?" she asked, flashing him a stunning smile that almost made Chizuru embarrassed. More so, she was slightly envious at the way she could turn on her charm instantly. That was obviously a skill she wouldn't ever learn or use.

The stranger grinned, the tips of his cheek bones turning slightly pink. "Er, um, are one of you two named Chizuru?" he asked, his forehead pinched slightly as if they already said no. Chizuru tensed slightly, her own eyebrows furrowing. His eyes instantly zeroed in on her and she felt her own face flush in reaction. The pinch on his forehead eased.

Sen nodded, not at all noticing. "Yeah, this is Chizuru." She gestured to her and Chizuru bite down on her tongue. It wasn't like she could have told Sen to lie for her, what good would that have done? It would've just raised questions, not to mention seem weird. But then, why was he looking for her? What did he want?

Slowly, she nodded in agreement. "I'm...Chizuru." she mumbled softly, trying to force her face to go neutral.

The stranger gave her a huge smile, his eyes lighting up similar to the way Sen's did when she was excited. He stepped towards her and placed his hands on her shoulders, "No shit?" he asked, his eyes skimming over her features as if to memorize her. Once again, Chizuru slowly nodded. "Well damn, he was right. You are cute..." Chizuru felt her face grow even hotter. Who said had she was cute? Why was he touching her? And why was he looking for her? He blushed slightly and dropped his hands. "Erâ€"uh, you know." He shrugged casually.

She opened her mouth to ask him, even hoped that Sen would do it before her, but the stranger spoke again. "Great, well, I'm Heisuke and I'll be seeing you around!" He stepped back, gave them an energetic wave and then turned away from them.

Chizuru and Sen stared after him, stunned and very confused. Sen was the first to speak up. "That was...\_odd\_." she mumbled, giggling. She tightened her hold on Chizuru's arm slightly and Chizuru snapped out of it.

"Yeah..." she whispered back, not sure what else to add or even think. The whole thing was beyond odd.

"Heisuke, huh?" Sen smiled and glanced back in the direction he walked towards. "Well, he's \_definitely\_ \_cute\_ himself." She nudged Chizuru. "And he did say we'd be seeing him around so...maybe you have an admirer?"

Chizuru bite her bottom lip nervously, "Hmm." Was all she managed, because she was sure Kazama would not be alright with that. And she wasn't alright with it either. How did one deal with an admirer? She pursed her lips, she honestly had no experience with anything like that. All her life she always had Kazama.

\_What is going on?\_

\* \* \*

><p>"Keep your elbows tuckedâ€" <em>dammit<em>!"

Okita straightened and ran the back of his hand across his sweaty brow. Casting a single irritated glance over to his friend and at the moment coach, Hijikata. With his deep violet gaze he simply stared back at him, his glare unwavering and authoritativeâ€"everything he hated at the moment.

Hijikata scowled, the feature that was nearly always a permanent feature on his face. "Are you done?" he asked flatly.

Taking a water bottle, he chugged a good amount and simply gave his friend a casual shrug. Hijikata's eyebrows pinched even further into his scowl, he liked to egg him on and he resisted the urge to smirk.

"Well I'm glad I'm amusing you, ass. But if you're not going to take this seriously, then I'm done wasting my time."

His gaze swung past Okita, "Saito and I are very \_busy\_ and don't have time with your shit." Hijikata returned his glare to him, his hand wrapping tightly around the sweat rag. Okita was sure he was going to chuck at him, but he knew that it wasn't like him to do so.

Okita turned his amused stare to Saito, like him, he was wearing loose and comfortable work out clothes. The clothes respectably clung to their sweaty bodies from training for the last couple hours. Saito's face was in that neutral expression, where it seemed like nothing about the situation was bothering him...but there was a slight hardness in his eyes that told him otherwise.

Saito was messaging the muscles in his hand with his forefinger and thumb, casually waiting for the verdict of his and Hijikata's conversation. To continue training or not. Okita gave him a smirk, "Am I wasting your time, Saito?" he asked.

He didn't stop doing his massaging, instead simply lifted his eyes to meet his. "Yes." He answered simply and caused Okita to chuckle.

"We can always call off the match." Hijikata added, tossing the rag to the chair beside him.

That instantly wiped the amused glitter from Okita's eyes. If anything, he was not a quitter and calling off the match would automatically be a forfeit on his partâ€”they were already too far into the week. Word had already been spread, an opponent picked and date set. No, going back would tarnish everything he had built.

He glared hard at Hijikata, "You'd like that, wouldn't you?" he asked curtly, tossing his water bottle towards him. Hijikata didn't flinch, instead he folded his arms across his chest and gave him a mocking smirk that had Okita's fingers twitching angrily.

"You ready to actually listen?" he asked, quirking an eyebrow. "Ready to take this training seriously?"

Okita rolled his eyes, "You act like I don't have a series of consecutive wins under my belt..." he shifted his body back towards Saito, who was stretching his arms and basically waiting for the go ahead to start again. Out of all his Frat brothers, he was the best sparring partner to have. Saito was quick on his feet, observant and an actual challenge at times. He was just as brutal and cunning as Okita was, if not more so.

But Saito wasn't attending College for this sort of thing. This was more a hobby and he was only in it for the exercise. He didn't want to be known for the Undergroundâ€”had too much at stake, just like Hijikata and just about all the others at the Frat. Hardly anyone knew that their particular Frat was very involved with the Underground, which was exactly why they were picky when it came to pledges.

Okita, on the other hand, lived for it. When he was pledged, they knew they had a wild card that could take them farther than any other brawler had before him. He wasn't sure how they knew before they even saw him in training, but they did and because of his certain taste for...adrenaline, it made their Frat more involved than ever before.

The Underground was his calling and his priority. The winnings were half bad either. If he hadn't promised his sisters, he wouldn't even put too much care into his school and do the Underground full time. It was much more fulfilling than earning a degree.

"That doesn't mean you shouldn't be prepared," Hijikata picked up his thrown water bottle and set it on the chair. "That ego will be the downfall of you someday, and please for the love of all that is good, keep your damned elbows tucked!"

Okita rolled his shoulders and obediently tucked his elbows in. The perfect position. "I don't think it's my ego, I call it...confidence." He leveled Saito with a stare and gave him a small nod, the go ahead to start.

Immediately, Saito's eyes hardened again with seriousness. His

shoulders squared and his elbows tucked to his side, fists clenched and raised slightly. The first move was quick and precise, a side step punch that was aimed for his mid-section. Okita shuffled his feet, his knuckles just grazing the side of his body.

"Hands up, Okita." Hijikata reprimanded, "You\_ always \_get sloppy when you dodge."

Okita resisted the urge to say something snide, but mostly because Saito was already coming back at him. The guy really was quick on his feet and really, a waste of potential. They could easily double their finances if he joined. Being more conscious, Okita kept his hands level and pushed back as Saito's fists came flying at him. The sound of his fists hitting his palms were such a lovely sound to his adrenaline pumped body.

"There you go," Hijikata encouraged, his face slightly pinched with concentration. "Remember, this opponent is known for his right hook and fake outs. Be prepared for that."

Hijikataâ€”coach and all around informant on all his opponents, thanks to Sanosuke's digging and connections. His retort was right on the tip of his tongue, but Saito took the small window of opportunity to step into his blind spot, faked a right hook before he sank his left right into his abdomen. The punch was quickly followed with a knee to the same area and a right hook the side of the face. Before Saito could follow up with another left hit, Okita blocked it and was quick to put distance between them.

Hijikata shook his head, cursing under his breath and Okita wiped his mouth with the back of his shirt before spitting off to the side. There was a little bit of blood in it, but he wasn't put off by it. Instead, it fueled himâ€”training wasn't quite the high he enjoyed, but it came pretty close.

He grinned at Saito, "Fuck you and that damn left hook of yours." He gently rolled his head and nodded at him again. "You won't get me again, douche."

Saito's lips tugged upwards slightly in a small grin. "We'll see."

The training went on for another hour and a half, with Saito and Okita trading blows to their known weaknesses while Hijikata shouted and reprimanded from the side lines. Overall, it was a good training session for the first day. A foreshadow of how the Underground season would go for the year, but he mentally wished that all his matches would be a challenge like Saito was. So far,

Hijikata handed Okita the sweat rag and he was quick to press the fluffy towel against his face. "If you keep your head in the match, you'll do good." Hijikata glanced at Saito and gave him a brief nod. "Thanks, as always, for your help Saito."

Okita grunted a mumbled thanks and took a large swig of his water. "Same time tomorrow." He told him with a wide smirk. "Won't be as easy as today."

Saito chuckled very softly before he exited the room. Hijikata glanced at his watch and grimaced slightly, "I should get going too."

I have to meet Kondou and then I have a few admissions to go over." He glanced at Okita who was already packing his own items away. "You have an hour before your first class. You should hurry."

"Yeah, yeah." Okita threw his duffle bag over his shoulder and smirked, "Don't you have someone else to fuss over now?"

Hijikata smirked back, shaking his head. "Not until 9 o'clock."

The two chuckled before going their own way. It was best that no one saw them together and if they did, it was as infrequent as possible. Which was why they did early morning training. At college, most kids were dropping into bed or still sleeping when Okita woke up.

He suppressed a yawn and stretched. The cool crisp morning air felt good against his warm skin and it tingled in a familiar way. Digging into his pocket he pulled out his cellphone and switched the settings on his phone to receive messages. He always turned the alerts on his phone off when he was training—that time was dedicated to himself and who he was training with. Even if he liked to give Hijikata a hard time.

Instantly, his cellphone chimed with two unread text messages and one missed call. He opened the first missed text from Shinpachi.

\_Srsly, bro! Make sure the crazy girl u sleep with is GONE before u leave! Major collateral damage. \_

Okita rolled his eyes, but couldn't help the chuckle. It wasn't his problem, really, the moment they had done the deed, it was done. He was accomplished. And how did she not wake up when he was leaving? He made a lot of noise as he fumbled for his stuff in the dark. Honestly, he was glad he wasn't around to deal with it.

The moment he pushed them out of the front door, they would be asking for his phone number or when the next "date" would be and he'd just shut the door on them in answer. Many times, they would kick and scream at the door—demanding in all their mortified horror to have the door opened. Once or twice they barged right in because someone forgot to lock the door.

In those cases, objects would get thrown about and swears would come pouring out of the Sorority girls mouth like she were drunk and not at all embarrassed about such language. Then, one of the other guys in the house would come by and escort the pissed off girl back to the door. Giving her fake apologies and false promises of having a 'talk' with him about his behavior before the door made it's re-acquaintance with their faces again.

Okita shook his head. Yeah, he was really glad he wasn't around for all that.

He frowned slightly, as glad as he was, Okita was slightly peeved at himself. He hadn't meant to fall asleep afterwards, that wasn't what he did and it was a near fatal move on his part. If he continued to fall asleep after sex, then it gave them the idea that they were more than what they were. Okita bristled at the thought. But he couldn't help it. With his mind buzzing, sleep was the only way to silence it. He needed to be careful next time around—letting himself slip like that was dangerous.



Okita clicked through the text and opened the other one which was from Heisuke, as well as the missed phone call.

\_Yo, found ur Chizuru. Rly is a cutie! WTF is she hangin' 'round u for? \_

Okita stopped in his tracks. That's right. In the long scheme of things, everything was sort of upside down because of his mind racing around \_her\_. Because she blew him off, brushed off his token of friendship like it was some sort of trickâ€”though in her defense it did seem odd, but really! Who rejects friendships? He felt his jaw lock with anger and he huffed out a pent up breath.

It was too early for this shit. Way, \_way\_ too early. But he couldn't just let this go and now that Heisuke found her...well, it was time to win her over. If anything, he was going to \_prove\_ himself. He'd show her that he was being honest, that he wasn't anything like what Kazama had probably said about him, and that he simply wanted to be her friend...he wasn't pitying her, or whatever else feeling was holding her back that she hadn't vocalized.

Her eyes still haunted him from when she thanked him after Kazama arrived. Like she was silently \_apologizing\_...for a lot of things that he didn't realize she didâ€”or what she \_thought\_ she did to him. It only intrigued him more about her and damned, it would be so much easier if he could just stay away from her for good. Let things settle between her and Kazama...let him focus on him, like always. It would be best for them both.

But as always, a challenge was what Okita thrived for and Chizuru was unlike any challenge he'd ever come across. He pressed the redial button on his phone and pressed it to his ear. Within three short rings, the other end picked up.

"U-uh, yeah...?" Heisuke's voice was groggy and half a sleep.

"Wake your ass up, runt. We need to chat. Get over to the Frat house, pronto."

Heisuke yawned loudly on the other end, "Is this some sort of...initiation or some shit...?" he asked, cutting off into another yawn.

"Just fucking do it, freshman." With that, he hung up and picked up his pace. Oh yes, he was coming up with a plan. One that would certainly win her over in no time.

\* \* \*

><p>Heisuke groaned and slowly lifted his head up from the dining table. His eyebrows pinched, "This is why I had to hurry my ass over?" he asked, lowering his head back down to the comfort of his arms. His eyelids fluttered as he closed them, sighing deeply as sleep clawed at him to return.<p>

Okita rolled his eyes and slammed his hand down inches away from his face. Quickly Heisuke popped up, his eyes wide and startled. He glared at Okita and waved him away. "I'm up, I'm up." He mumbled, slouching against the chair.

"So tell me everything," Okita settled into the seat closest to him.

"Like what?" asked Heisuke, cutting off into a quick yawn. He rubbed the sleep from his eyes and frowned. "I found her, like you said and then tried calling you." He shrugged, "Didn't know you already moved on with another slice..."

Okita narrowed his eyes, "What?" he asked.

Heisuke shrugged again, "Well, when you didn't answer...I called the others. Shinpachi answered and had said you were preoccupied with one of the chicks from the Sorority or something. I figured you didn't care anymore." He leaned forward and rested his chin in his hand. "But hey, kudos! Do you mind if I take a stab at her? I mean, she's more so in my league and man, when she blushes it's really cute in that way that screams virgin, ya know?"

Angrily, Okita smacked his arm that held up his chin and Heisuke smacked his chin into the table, his reaction time just a little behind. Heisuke wailed in pain and started to spew curses. "What the \_hell\_ was \_that\_ for?!" he yelled, rubbing his chin.

"For being a dumbass!" he retorted, glaring hard at him. "Don't you dare go near her. She's not in your league and her boyfriend will blacklist you if you try."

Heisuke gave him a skeptical look, "Boyfriend?" he asked tilting his head slightly, "You didn't say she had a boyfriend."

Okita shrugged as casually as he could, "Didn't think it was important." He didn't want to mention how he disliked the fact himself. "She's dating the Student Council president..."

Heisuke's mouth dropped open and his eyebrows pinched, "\_That\_ stuck up douche?" he grimaced, "But...isn't heâ€œ"

"Yeah." Okita cut him off, nodding.

"And she has no clue?"

Okita rolled his eyes, "Do you really need to ask?" he shook his head, "Besides it's none of our business. Just remember how much of a pain in the ass he already is. We don't need more of a reason for him to be sniffing around us."

Heisuke frowned but nodded, "So, tell me. If she has a boyfriend...and you're still getting yourself off with other girls, and obviously don't want anyone else to try, why the hell were you so persistent? What do you want with her?"

"It's a long story," he answered curtly and vaguely again. "But you didn't finish. Tell me what you found out."

Heisuke snorted and shook his head. He wanted nothing more than to retort with something witty or sarcastic, but he knew it wouldn't end well. Thus the life of a freshman pledge. "What's there to say?" he asked, tipping his head back and crossing his arms. "She lives on the second floor, room 4b, with another rather cute girl...um, she was

surprised that I was looking for her, I guess, andâ€œ"

"Did you tell her why you were looking for her?" Okita hoped that Heisuke wasn't that stupid...but really, that was up for debate.

His features pinched with annoyance and he rolled his eyes, "No, douche. I'm not that stupid," He glared and raised his middle finger at him. "Fuck off." He warned, earning him a wide smug smirk from Okita. "But yeah, that was all. Then I said I'd see her around...I didn't mention you, or why, or anything."

Slowly, Okita nodded. Pleased with him, but not willing to say so for obvious reasons. The main one being that wasn't his M.O. He pushed out of his seat and started towards the door but Heisuke grunted with disapproval and annoyance.

"Oi, dick! Are you really not going to explain any of this creeper status shit?" he asked, half raised out of his chair and ready to follow him.

Okita smirked, "Where's the fun in that?" he asked, tipping his head. "Besides, you don't need to know the details of anything and the fact that you call it creepy is not helping your case." He shrugged, "There's a method to my madness, now let's get going. I'll fill you in on what you can know."

Heisuke pouted in annoyance but followed along, "I would say it's a method," he mumbled, mostly to himself. "Just plain madness..." But regardless, he listened intently to what Okita did tell him. The gaps of what was going on getting bigger and more confusing for him. In Heisuke's opinion, everything that was happening was just way too complicated.

Okita leveled him with a glare, "You got all that?" he asked, shouldering his backpack.

"Yeah, yeah." He pointed at his head, "It's all up here."

"That's why I'm asking," he smirked down at him, Heisuke immediately scowled and shoved Okita.

"Asshole." He cursed, "Now, if you no longer need me here, I'm going to go nap on the couch before Shinpachi or Sanosuke wake up!" Heisuke cast Okita one more glare before leaving the room.

Glancing at his watch, Okita scowled himself. He was never one to really arrive early for class, but if his plan was going to work, then he needed to do it. He grimaced and grabbed a quick cup of coffeeâ€œskipping the sugar and creamer. He needed something to snap him into his mood, he knew this plan was going to take everything he had.

It was going to be difficult to carry it through. The taste of his coffee was bitter and sharp, but it did the job in record time. Within seconds he felt it start working in his system and he was popping gum into mouth and already out the door.

Fifteen minutes later he arrived to his classroom, barely any students were in there and the ones that were, were all underclassmen. He offered them a coy smirk he was known for and

bounded up to the middle row, second seat to the aisle. The same seat as yesterday. Shrugging off his backpack, he cast one small look at the clock and then to the empty seat next to him.

Now, all he had to do was dig deep and find that patience everyone seemed to believe he didn't have.

\_Game on.\_

\* \* \*

><p>Chizuru fidgeted and pinned her gaze firmly on the professor as he spoke about their most recent assignment and something about a possible quiz being soon...or something like that. She pursed her lips irritably and suppressed the sigh. Instead, she tentatively raised her Styrofoam cup and took a long sip. The caffeine was giving her a much needed jolt.<p>

But that only really made her even more hyper aware of Okita sitting right next to her.

Chizuru wasn't going to lie, but she honestly thought that he wouldn't want anything to do with her after she blew him off. Not that he was actually paying attention, or disrupting her, or even trying to make conversation with her...he was just sitting next to her. Quietly. Had been sitting next to her for nearly a week now and she was getting more and more anxious as the days passed.

Why sit next to her still if he didn't even want to talk? Was he waiting for her to say something first? Because she greeted himâ€œout of manners and secretly to get him to talk to her againâ€œwhenever she took her seat next to him, but all he did was give her a firm nod in return. Then, he'd go chat with anyone else that greeted him, aside from her.

The first day after the incident, she had thought that he had forgotten all about it when she entered the room and his face lit up. Or, rather, lit up in the way Okita could. His lips stretched into his smirk that always seemed pleased with some inside joke. Chizuru froze for only half a second, before she slowly made her way up to the seat she picked out for herself the other day, all the while trying hard not to show just how relieved and happy she was that he wasn't mad.

When she got closer, he got up and started towards her. She slowly raised a hand to greet him, but his eyes only skimmed over her briefly before he brushed past her and greeted a fellow frat brother that was a few steps behind her.

Instantly she felt her face burn with embarrassment. Her heart sank with disappointment and she wanted nothing more than to hide her face and pick another seat. But it seemed ridiculous and stupid to do so when she was literally two steps away from her seat. With rigid movements, she seated herself firmly, head held eye and her eyes trained to everything but the chatting Okita and nameless friend near her.

Chizuru had tried to appear unaffected by his brush off and once the professor entered the classroom, it made the task easier. That was, until Okita took the seat next to her. She waited for the entire

class period for Okita to start saying something to her, to start and try to gain her attention, but no. It was shocking.

At first, it didn't bother herâ€”for about a minute before her over active mind started rattling with several different things. What was with the cold shoulder? Was he really that mad? Would he forgive her if she apologized? Did she want to apologize? In the end, she came to the same conclusion multiple times, it was her fault he was acting this way towards her.

She tried to apologize to him, but he usually beat her to class and he'd be preoccupied with others. After class, he'd be instantly surrounded by either his fellow frat buddies or sorority girls. During class was not an option and even if it were, she lost her nerve every time she turned her eyes to him. The words just died on her lips when he would turn and stare at her, almost expectantly, but the hardness of his eyes made her chicken out. Every time she got mad at herself for not just taking the plunge and doing it.

Chizuru wasn't even sure why she still put herself through all the trouble and didn't just choose another seat. But deep down, she knew why. She was hoping he'd one day turn to her and start distracting her. How had it all come down to her wanting that? Kazama's warning rang in her head every time she took the seat next to him, but nothing made sense about it.

When he chatted with others, she watched him secretly. He'd laugh like everyone else, he'd show his distaste just like anyone, and he cursed more often than any other person would, but it seemed normal. There was nothing about him that screamed danger, out of place, or horrible. Even that day he helped her, she got a vibe from him that he was a protector of sorts...

She frowned. For the first few days she tried to keep her ears peeled to anything and everything her fellow peers were saying about Okita. His name and the name of his Frat bounced around a lot between the freshman. But it was nothing she hadn't already heard. The Shin Frat was apparently extremely exclusive when it came to pledges and Rush week. Souji Okita was their star of the Frat, among four others. They held raging parties...etc.

During an extremely curious night, Chizuru even googled him and the Frat. All that she could find was a random fan page of the Frat and all their membersâ€”both current and past. The freshman pledges were not pictured, as pledges could either make it or be kicked out after initiation. But Okita's name was the most talked about.

Her curiosity knew no bounds and she was slightly embarrassed that she had sunk that low just to satisfy her troubled mind.

Before she realized it, the Professor ended class and she found that she zoned out for the last half hour of class. She grimaced and started to place her items into her bag. Automatically she snuck a peek at Okita and found that he wasn't already half way out the door or even surrounded with girls or friends. This was her chance, if ever she were going to take one.

Feeling braver than she had all week, she quickly shouldered her bag and crossed over to Okita. His gaze lifted from his backpack to hers. The depth of his emerald eyes took her breath away and reminded her

how haunting they could be. "Uh, Okita?" she unintentionally stammered and cursed herself for not speaking clearly.

He picked up his backpack and tipped his head. His eyes were still hard and not at all welcoming. "Yeah?" he asked, letting his gaze skip over her shoulder before returning. She guessed he was in a hurry or he didn't want to talk.

She swallowed the lump in her throat, "Iâ€uh..." She frowned. Chizuru closed her eyes and ducked her head, "I, uh...never mind." Feeling her face start to heat up she tried hard to keep her lips from wobbling and she bit her lip. With a quick glance, she noticed his eyes briefly look...disappointed? Before they hardened to their stoic gaze again.

He nodded, "Right." With that, he pushed past her and left. His hand instantly in his pocket as he dug out another cigarette. The retreating figure was so upsetting to her that she almost ran after him to try again, but she didn't. She let her feet feel like lead and keep her rooted.

When was she ever going to do what she wanted? When was she not going to let fear overrule her? Slowly and suddenly very moody, Chizuru started to walk again. Her mind was rattling again with pointless and obvious remarks on how stupid she just seemed. She was thankful that he didn't at least laugh in her face for her stupidity. But his cold look said it all.

Chizuru was still deep in thought when Sen called out to her from nearly across campus. She paused and lifted a hand to wave as she rushed over in a way that made Chizuru feel like the most ungraceful thing in the world. Her short hair bounced perfectly and not a thing was out of place as she reached her. How on earth did someone manage that?

Sen smiled widely, slightly out of breath but the flush to her face only made her that much more prettier. Chizuru wasn't blind to the way some of the guys stopped to stare at her as she rushed past them. "I'm so glad I caught you!" she bounced on her toes and cupped her hands together. "Please, please, \_please\_ tell me you're free tonight...?"

Chizuru was almost fearful to say she was, but there couldn't be anything to crazy going on a Tuesday night, right? Hesitantly she smiled, "Uh, I'm free...why? What's up?"

"Oh, thank goodness!" she pulled at her hands excitedly. "We got invited to the..." Sen glanced around and then lowered her voice. "To the \_underground\_!"

"The...underground?" Chizuru whispered back, confused. She felt her features automatically pinch. "What is that? If it's a party, I'm sorry but I really can'tâ€""

Sen raised a hand, "No! It's not...It's um, hard to explain, I guess cause not a lot of people\_ know\_." Sen nodded, "It's even rarer to get an invite! So we\_ got\_ to go! It's not a party and it shouldn't go on too late! You so cannot back down now! Please say you'll come with me?"

Chizuru sighed, but smiled at her regardless. "So long as you promise we won't be out too late...then yes, I'll go with you."

Quickly and rather roughly, Sen pulled Chizuru to her and hugged her tightly. "Ohmigod, you so will not regret this!" She pulled back and squealed. "I'm going back to our room and picking out our outfits right now!"

"But don't you haveâ€" "

"Crap, what does one wear to this sort of thing...?" Sen tipped her head and pursed her lips briefly before her expression flipped back to the goofy and giddy smile. "Well, I'll figure it out. I'll see you back at the dorm!" With that, she pulled Chizuru into another huge hug before leaving.

Chizuru stared at her friend and shook her head slowly. It was getting harder to say no to her, but she knew Kazama would not be pleased if he knew. She pursed her lips in thought and her grip tightened on her backpack strap. He not only wouldn't be pleased, but he'd forbid her to go and do who knows what else.

She frowned at the thought. Already, she could easily hear him tell her in a stiff and curt tone tell her what a horrible idea this 'Underground' thing was. How Sen was not a good influence if she let her talk her into going and then he'd say something else about how her father wouldn't approve. It usually always floated back to her father.

Sure, she wasn't thrilled about going. Nor was she particularly excited to go, as Sen was, but that wasn't the point. Couldn't she tell Kazama something without him shooting her idea down? Couldn't he pretend to entertain it before he went off and told her how stupid it was? She always indulged him, even if the matter bored her to tears.

\_So don't tell him.\_ Chizuru thought with absolute resolution.

And for some weird, unexplained reason, she didn't feel guilty about thinking that. Instead, she felt relieved.

\* \* \*

><p>"How did you say you got the invite again?"<p>

Sen smiled over her shoulder, "Charm." She answered simply and shrugged. "Heard some frat guy talk about it and I managed to coax the location out of him. He said girls are more likely to get entrance than any others."

Chizuru bit her lip. That didn't sound reassuring. To her, it sounded like imposing. Showing up to a party you obviously weren't invited to. But what was this thing exactly? Absentmindedly, Chizuru started to fiddle with the hem of the pale yellow top Sen had forced her to wear. It wasn't hers, but Sen's shirt with a low cut neckline and stuck to her body like clothes shouldn't.

Unlike Sen, she didn't have quite the chest to fill out the top which made it slightly more modest than it would've looked on Sen. Persistently, she kept two out of the three small bottoms by breast

area buttoned. There was no way she was going to show that much cleavage, much to Sen's dismay.

Quickly, Sen spun towards her and swatted her hands away from the shirt. "Stop that," she reprimanded, "If you keep messing with it, it'll keep rising upwards."

Chizuru sighed, "Okay, okay." She lifted her hands and instead hooked her thumbs into her jean pockets. At least, thankfully, Sen had allowed her to wear jeans. Granted they were the skinniest, form fitting ones she owned, but they were jeans regardless. She couldn't argue with that, considering how Sen had easily come to the conclusion to wear a short skirt the event. "What is this thing again?"

Sen raised an eyebrow, "I said it's hard to explain," She grabbed her cellphone and purse. "It's easier if you just see for yourself. I mean, I can't really even believe it."

"This doesn't sound very good, Sen." She told her, following her out of their room.

"Trust me. Do you trust me?"

"Of course, butâ€"

"No, buts!" Sen smiled brightly, "Now \_hurry\_ up!" Chizuru picked up her pace, slightly surprised to see how Sen moved so quickly and easily in wedged heels. Sure, they weren't too high but still...it was a feat in her eyes.

For nearly ten minutes they walked around to what Chizuru figured was aimless. Sen kept checking her phone, would hum in contemplation and then start moving again. At the time, they seemed to be the only ones around in the areas Sen was dragging her to, but finally they started to see others. Sen's face brightened when her eyes landed on one of the Agriculture buildings that was nearly on the edge of campus.

The building was domed, with a solar panel roof and large windows. The lights were off, but the students that were near them kept heading towards it. Hesitantly, Chizuru glanced at Sen with confusion. "It's in the Ag building?" she asked quietly.

Sen nodded, "That's what the guy said." She hooked her arm through Chizuru's and started to pull her towards the building. If they were the only ones around, she would've definitely objected. Probably have tried to suggest them going to the coffee shop to talk about each other or some nonsense. Chizuru even would've brought up her curiosity about Okita if it meant it would drag Sen away from the seemingly closed for the day Ag building.

"How is...how is everyone getting inside?" she asked again, her eyes turning to Sen. For a minute, the two watched as spurts of people walked towards the building, around the side and then, gone. The lights in the building not once turning on. No one came to open the front door, nothing.

"Maybe there's a side door?" asked Sen, her eyes sparkling with excitement.



With that said, Sen pulled her towards the building, following the same path they had previously watched the others go in. But there was no small door. What was there, was a window down at ground level that was large and wide, propped open by a brick with a hastily 'Welcome' sign taped to the front.

Sen stared at the window for what seemed like forever before she turned to Chizuru, a slightly sheepish expression on her face. "He didn't mention this part..." she mumbled, the tips of her cheeks turning pink.

Chizuru fought the discouraged sigh that wanted to escape and instead, gestured to the window. "Well, we're already here, aren't we?"

Sen gave her a grateful smile and nodded before she got down and started towards the window. It took a bit of shimmying and wiggling for Sen to gracefully enter with a skirt on, but she did it. When Chizuru tried, she huffed and puffed and was just about to give up trying to be graceful about it. She wasn't even sure how Sen had managed it.

The window was heavier than she thought, her shirt kept riding up her stomach being on ground level and all, and she couldn't get an idea of how far the drop from the window to the floor would be once she was in. Not to mention, Sen couldn't reach the window to keep it a loft, so it kept repeatedly hitting her backside.

Chizuru was just glad that no one was around to see it but Sen. She wiggled and heard a giggle on the other end. Chizuru rolled her eyes, half determined to just pull her self back up but she didn't get the choice before she felt hands circle her hips and gently pull her down.

Her breath was quick to leave her and just as easily she was set on her feet. A little dizziness and much confused, Chizuru stared up into unfamiliar amber colored eyes. They seemed to glow in dim lightening and she flinched, bumping into Sen behind her. The man was tall, about the same height as Okita and Kazama if not just a smidge or two taller.

He wore a black shirt that read 'Security' in bold white letters followed by a Greek Fraternity symbol, the shirt stretched over what looked to be a very fit body. His deep red was short and, for lack of a better word, silky looking. Overall, he was a handsome guy, especially with his eyes.

The security guy smiled and Chizuru found that she was staring, mouth open. Instantly ducked her head, "Uh, erm...thanks." She glanced anxiously at Sen who only smiled prettily. Seeing how she wasn't worried, she tried to force herself to relax but found it difficult to do so. Instead, she fixed her top and ducked her head again.

"You ladies lost?" he asked, voice deep but light. Teasing even.

Sen was quick to step towards him, "Not at all," She tipped her head to the side, "But we appreciate the concern."

The guy's smile didn't falter, but there was a sparkle in his amber eyes. Chizuru wasn't sure she understood it. "Any reason you two were

climbing through the window?" he asked again.

Chizuru glanced at the window and noticed another guy was in the shadows of the room, removing the brick from the window and latching the lock. His deep blue eyes did the same in the dark as the others. In one quick motion, he pulled the sign from the window and crumbled it.

"Every fucking time, dude." He mumbled, shaking his head. Chizuru noticed that he also wore "what she assumed was once" a t-shirt, with the same words and symbol on it, but this shirt had no sleeves and instead showed off every muscle the guy could and would use as security.

She slide a nervous look over to Sen. What kind of event were they attending that needed Fraternity Security? She wanted to ask, but figured it was not the time or place. Sen pursed her lips dramatically.

"What do you mean?" she asked, her voice raising an octave higher. "Isn't that the entrance...?"

The red haired security exchanged looks with his blue eyed friend. The two then shared a quick laugh before he turned back to her. "Can I see your invite?" he asked and suddenly Chizuru understood what was going on.

Whatever the event was, they had just snuck into it. Or believed to have been. Sen crossed her arms, leveling him with a stare. "Is that a trick question?" she asked. Chizuru almost expected her to stomp her foot as well, but she didn't. "These types of events don't have invites!"

The one closest to Chizuru, Mr. Blue eyes, spoke up. "Wrong answer." He reached towards Chizuru and she flinched, but the touch wasn't hostile or forced. He raised his hand, "We're gonna need to escort you girls out."

The amber eyed guy nodded, "Sorry, ladies. Maybe next time?" He held his arm open and gestured to the door near them.

Sen stared, wide eyed and mouth opened. "What?" she asked and she shook her head. "No way! You've got to be joking!" She pointed at the window and this time did stomp her foot. Her wedge making a loud echo on the ground. "The window said welcome on it! We saw others do the same! And I just climbed through that damned window in a skirt and heels!"

"Yeah, we watched you do it." Mr. Blue eyes gave her a coy look that had Sen blushing. Chizuru guessed she probably would've done something about the look, hadn't he also been pretty handsome and hadn't she been trying not to get kicked out. "but this shit happens every time. People who already got in, open a window to sneak others in. Untrustworthy people. It's a big mess."

Chizuru's eyes widened, "There was an entrance?" she asked.

Amber eyes turned towards her, "Yup. It says so on the invite. If you got one."

Sen frowned and shot Chizuru an apologetic look, one that had Chizuru feeling sad for her. She had been so excited for it too. "We were invited, though. Really." She heard herself say.

The two stared at her expectantly and it was on the tip of her tongue to say that Okita invited her—"despite his cold shoulder-ness earlier. It was going to raise questions, especially from Sen but it was for her. This was something that could work. After all, Okita had said it himself. '\_You never know when it'll come in handy.' \_

"O-okita invited me—"us\_." She finally mumbled, gesturing to herself and Sen. She could feel her face start to burn and she hoped that it wasn't as noticeable in the dim settings of whatever room they were in. The two exchanged another look, disbelief? Uncertainty?

"Did he now?" asked blue eyes, his head tipped the side and she noticed he was wearing a green bandanna. Not that he needed to with his short cropped hair.

She nodded, "Yeah. We have first period together, he sits next to me." Chizuru resisted the urge to fiddle with her fingers, or shirt. She didn't need them to keep doubting her. Sen instantly caught on and nodded in agreement.

"Yeah, he did." She wrapped an arm around her with utter confidence. "Why don't you just check with him and ask if you don't believe us? He's in the same fraternity, isn't he?"

The two exchanged a look again, before their eyes glanced and lingered on Chizuru. Blue eyes opened his mouth, but the door near them burst open. "Shinpachi, Sanosuke! What the fuck are you guys—" The voice trailed off as familiar blue eyes landed on them. It was Heisuke, the guy from about a week ago who approached her and asked if she was Chizuru. He smiled brightly and knowingly at them, "Hey!"

Blue eyes turned and scowled, "You know them, runt?" he asked.

"Heisuke, darling!" Sen cooed in a voice that was sugary sweet and sappy. Chizuru automatically felt her lips start to pull into a smile. It was almost comical how Heisuke's face turned red with her endearment. "Of course\_ he knows us." She added, quickly tugging Chizuru with her as they bounced over to him. She placed a hand lightly on his shoulder and leaned in towards him, flashing her wide and megawatt smile at the guys.

Amber eyes smiled, his shoulders shaking lightly as if he was trying hard not to laugh. "Can you vouch for them, Heisuke you stud?" he crossed his arms, his eyes bounced over to Chizuru briefly. "She says she's friends with Okita...?"

Heisuke nodded, "She sure is." He glanced at her and winked, causing her to blush. Did he actually know Okita? And if so, did that mean he knew the truth? Why didn't he just throw them under the bus? "You guys are too serious...they're girls." He leaned towards them and lowered his voice, but it didn't stop them from overhearing him. "\_Hott\_ girls, douches. What the \_hell\_ are they going to do?!"

Blue eyes rolled his eyes and shook his head, "See right there? That's your problem, \_freshman\_." he pointed at him, "You \_assume\_ and make an \_ass\_ out of yourself."

Heisuke rolled his eyes, "Fuck you, Shinpachi."

Chizuru noticed blue eyes, Shinpachi, narrow his eyes to glare down at Heisuke who didn't seem at all phased by the look. She snuck a peek at Sen who simply stood by, not at all perturbed and then glanced at Amber eyes. He shook his head slowly, giving them both a sympathetic look.

"Children, come on now." He gestured to them, "Heisuke, take the girls to the arena. Shinpachi, come on. We have other rooms to clear."

Shinpachi grimaced and shrugged, "Do you always have to do that, Sanosuke?"

With that, the two exited the room. Heisuke waited until they were gone before he turned and smiled at Chizuru and Sen. "This way ladies." He lead them out of the room and down the hall. Chizuru hadn't taken the tour of the Ag building, specifically because she didn't have any classes there. She remembered reading about it, but that was about it. They were obviously in the lower part of the building, since it was all cement with no windows.

Heisuke lead them up a short set of stairs, down another long windowless hallway, down another small set of stairs before Chizuru and Sen started to hear anything. They stopped right outside a pair of double doors that were barely muffling the sounds from the inside. Heisuke smirked at them knowingly.

"First time, right?" he asked, eyes sparkling with an untold secret. Chizuru felt herself nod rather than say something. What was there to say, really? "Next time, don't sneak into any windows. There's always one door that's unlocked for such purposes."

Sen nodded furiouslyâ€"confident that there would be 'another time.' Chizuru wasn't so sure. Her mind was reeling with the possibility of what was going on. Heisuke grinned and pushed open the double doors, the noise washing over them that Chizuru resisted the urge to throw her hands over her ears to block the sound.

What was a dull roar, was now full blast as thousands of voices mingled among one another while music blasted over that. It was like a rock concert, minus the band and front stage. Heisuke picked up Chizuru's hand and placed it on his shoulder, then gestured to Sen to do the same. "Hang on." He told her and began to weave them through the multiple bodies.

It was a good thing Chizuru wasn't claustrophobic, because that would've set her offâ€"not that it wasn't now. One could hardly breath properly, hardly stand without getting pushed or bumped into, and could hardly think with all the noise. Sen's grip tightened on her shoulder and she felt her move closer.

"Isn't this \_something\_?" she shouted with glee and wonder.

Chizuru still wasn't so sure. Already she felt like her shirt was sticking to her skin like a hot summer day, sweat was beading on her forehead and she wanted to rush back to the chill September night. Finally Heisuke stopped and gestured to one of the few available chairs in the area. The spot was rather close to the makeshift stage—assuming that's what it was.

It was a circular raised stone in the center of the room, flat and big enough to fit two people easily but not really good for a band. Chizuru didn't see any instruments or equipment that usually belonged to such events. Not to mention how the crowd was circled around the makeshift stage. It wouldn't make sense for that kind of event.

Her eyes skipped over to the many faces, a few wore colors or symbols of their school or frats. There were girls scattered about, dressed scantily or colorful. Sen's outfit was at least tasteful. Chizuru's eyes immediately zoned in on a few guys across the circle from them, their colors and school Crest on the front of their shirts. \_Choshu.\_ They were well-known rivals to their school.

"What are they doing here...?" she mumbled, eyebrows pinching slightly.

Sen leaned towards her, "Right in the front! Can you believe it?!" she squealed and it got lost among all the other noises that bounced around.

It was hard for Chizuru to stay seated and wait to see what all the fuss was about. For one thing, all the others that were forced to stand and stay that way kept bumping into them that she almost got to feet to wait instead, but Heisuke was quick to come to their aid. Cursing and waving his fists around to get the rowdy guys behind them to quit. The other thing was how anxious she was.

She kept her eyes open for any sign of Okita, or goodness forbid, Kazama. He'd definitely not approve of all this and she didn't want to have to explain herself and why she hadn't even bothered to let him know. No, she'd much rather face Okita and his possible cold shoulder. Maybe she'd get to explain herself to him...

The overhead lights flickered and all talks instantly morphed into loud hoots and hollers. This time, Chizuru did cover her ears but only because it seemed like the few behind them were shouting right in their ears. Sen reached over and squeezed her hand in an excited way before she popped up and joined in all the yelling.

Heisuke turned towards them and grinned widely, "Show time."

Rather suddenly, Chizuru felt nervous and she stayed glued to her seat despite everyone around her. She just needed to get her bearing first. Needed to relax, clear her mind. It couldn't possibly be as bad as her imagination was leading her to believe. She was overreacting, definitely.

A random faced student walked to the center of the circle and started shouting into a megaphone that occasionally shrieked and sent goosebumps up and down Chizuru's arms. But it was hard to make out what he was trying to say, even with the help of the microphone.

"Welcome, civilians to the Underground. All bets are done," he shouted, his voice distorted and warbled. "Got that, punks! We don't deal with that shit and won't take it. No cheats! Remember the exits, remember to pick up your shit afterwards, remember the number 1 rule to fucking fight club!" The microphone squealed and Heisuke grimaced.

"Piece of shit microphone," he grumbled, shaking his head.

"We don't talk about fight club!" he shouted just as half the student body did. "Now without further ado, let's bring the boys out, shall we?"

And that was when Chizuru spotted Okita. It seemed weird, but the seconds before she noticed him, she felt his stare first. It seemed horribly cliché to say, but it was heated and almost...yearning for her to turn her head. And when she did, there he was. Staring right back at her. His green eyes vivid and bright even from the distance. Okita smirked knowingly and she fought her reaction, but the blush graced her face regardless.

That was when she noticed his attire. Shorts, just shorts. Bare chest that rippled and dipped with muscles she suspected he had. His hands up to his forearms were wrapped in neatly and spotless white medical tape. She watched as he started to jump in place, shaking his arms to get the muscles warmed up before he started to punch and knee the air in front of him.

Chizuru's heart sank and she felt suddenly short of breath. She turned to Sen who was bouncing up and down on her toes. "This...this is a fight, isn't it?" she asked and Sen turned towards her.

"Yeah," she didn't seem to notice the distress in her expression. "It's all the rage here. Underground fighting. Cool, huh?"

And there went the rest of breathe. Yeah, it was worse than her imagination.

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><p><strong>An: Wonderful, wonderful reviews! Thank you so, so much! Please, keep it up! Like always, love hearing your thoughts. They fuel me endlessly! :) Hope you enjoyed! Things are just getting started! \*\*

## 5. Nothing Wrong

AU. OkitaXChizuru Romance.

\*\*a/n: As always, sorry for the wait! Major writer's block, can't even...But it's here, it's done, it's updated! :) Enjoy! \*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Crazy<strong>

\*\*Chapter 5: Nothing Wrong\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chizuru stared for what seemed like eons before she finally forced her eyes to move and glance around at her surroundings again. Now that it knew what was going on, she understood it all. The raised circular <em>cement<em> stage, the rowdy crowd, the bets, and the secret invites. The cement was even oddly discoloredâ€"an obvious toll from all the dried up blood and sweat and other chemicals. This was obviously illegal since it was an underground sanction and there didn't seem to be any referee around.

The crowd around her jostled and seemed to grow in size in the few seconds. Chizuru was forced out of her chair with all the bodies that seemed to press up against her back and she all but jumped to her feet to put some space between them. Sen was too busy waving her arms around to notice the crowd pulsing around them.

For a nanosecond, the room went deadly silent and the announcer raised his hand high in the air to calm everyone down. Though, like any huge crowd, there were the one or two stragglers that kept on chatting. The announcer lifted his head and narrowed his eyes suspiciously into the crowd before he lifted the megaphone to his lips again.

"In this corner, we have the oneâ€"\_the only\_â€"your Underground Champ for fucking \_three\_ semesters straightâ€"" The crowd started to shout again, slowly building up as they chanted Okita's name. "Souji Okitaaaa!" The crowd around Chizuru seemed to suddenly double in size as they pressed closer to her and erupted into even louder cheers. She resisted the urge to throw her hands over her ears, but she was too busy making sure that she wasn't pushed out of her spot.

Sen looped her arm through Chizuru's and winked at her, "I got ya, girl!" She narrowed her eyes over her shoulder at the pressing group near them and the pressure seemed to lightenedâ€"if only just a little. "I still cannot believe this...!"

Chizuru pursed her lips and only gave a small nod. \_Sure.\_ But really, she wanted to just push her way through the crowd and out to get some fresh air into her lungs. She wasn't really sure why she suddenly felt like she couldn't breathe, she wasn't claustrophobic.

Her eyes zoned back to the stage where Okita came trotting up to. He jumped a few times before slowly stretching his arms and then his shoulders. His eyes skipped over to her before he turned towards the announcer who held up a hand to keep him in his "corner" of the stage.

"And in the opposing corner, we have challenge star and pride of K. Choshuâ€"" Almost immediately the announcer's voice was lost in the shouts and insults from the crowd around her. They easily outnumbered the opposing challengers, so their weak encouragements were nothing to their jeers. The opponent hopped towards his spot on the stage and glared. As if it was Okita's personal fault that he was getting booedâ€"which, in a way it was.

Heisuke leaned over and smirked, "Now the \_real\_ fun begins!" he cupped his hands around his mouth and shouted. "Fuck 'em up, Okita!"

If Okita managed to hear him, he didn't make any show of it. His eyes just briefly flickered over the crowd, settled on Chizuru for a blazing second before back to the Ref who stood in between the two bare chested and well muscled men.

He raised the megaphone and miraculously, the crowd instantly hushed. They knew the routine by now, "Winner is determined by a knock out, or if he gives up"but \_where's \_the pride in that?" The ref"bravely, in Chizuru's opinion" gave a pointed look to the opponent who only glowered at him before flipping him off, much to Choshu's glee. The ref only chuckled and then raised his other hand that held a blow horn. He gave it a quick squeeze and it gave a loud sharp screech before he quickly hopped off the stage.

Good thing too, since the moment the screech ended, the two lunged for each other. Immediately the crowd around her pushed up against each other and started to yell again. This time, she did cover her ears and she was sure that the guy closest to her was purposely shouting into her ear. Sen glared over her shoulder before looking back at the stage, eyes wide but not with fear or shock like Chizuru was sure hers were, but rather with fascination.

Chizuru braved a glance and almost regretted it. The opponent already had blood dripping down his face and what looked to be a swollen face. She winced as Okita landed another hard right hook straight the swelling spot and he toppled over with a hard smack to the cement floor. He rolled over to his knees and spit on the ground"adding more to the copper stained ground.

Never had she felt more sick, more anxious and surprisingly, more \_alive\_ than she did watching Okita move about. She knew she shouldn't have felt like that, should have just excused herself and left. After all, he didn't want her there and she didn't want to be there...right?

She gasped loudly as the opponent snuck in a sucker punch that had Okita's head snap painfully backwards. Chizuru covered her mouth, embarrassed, even though no one even heard her what with all the shouting going on. Okita slowly, almost inhumanly, dropped his head back down"chin tucking into his chest before he rolled his shoulders. His eyes darted to Chizuru and she quickly dropped her hands from her mouth.

Before he turned back to the match, she could have sworn that he smirked just in the slightest bit and she frowned. If there was ever a moment she should've walked away, it was then...but she couldn't. No, it was more than that. She didn't \_want\_ to and she hated herself for not being able to overcome that want.

"\_You just want to make sure he's okay."\_ She stubbornly told herself. "\_You can't leave by yourself anyway..." \_

After the fifth or fourth time repeating it, she almost believed it. \_Almost.\_

\* \* \*

><p>"How are you so sure that she'll show up?" Heisuke crossed his arms and his face twisted into a scowl. "I mean, I don't know her personally but she doesn't seem the type to be attracted to these



kinds of events...and if she's dating Kazama, do we really  
<em>want<em> her here?"

Okita looked up at Heisuke, his eyes narrowing into a hardened glare, "Who the fuck cares if she's dating him?" he asked, stretching. "It doesn't define her character...I know for a fact that she isn't at all like his stuck up ass."

Heisuke grinned, "Yeah? That why you're doing this whole deal...?"

Okita rolled his eyes, "None of your damn business," he rolled his shoulders and glanced back at him, "but I'm pretty damn sure she'll be here. The plan's in motion."

"Speaking of which...\_how do you fucking know\_?" Okita's absolute answers drove Heisuke crazy. It wasn't possible that he knew how everything would work out, it was just pure stupid luck. But if Heisuke knew anything about his long time friend was that he always did have luck.

"I just do." He shrugged and couldn't help but smile when Heisuke cursed under his breath. Okita knew because he put all the appropriate pieces together. He listened and knew who to talk to. Heisuke only needed to know what was necessary and where was the fun in telling him all of it? "Now go and look for them."

Heisuke waved his hand dismissively, "Yeah, whatever..."

"Don't forget to double check that the area is secure, ok? I can't promise that I'll be especially social to any backstage crashers." Okita popped to his feet and he raised his arms high above his head. Heisuke sighed and tipped his head to the side, his face twisted into a scowl.

"You have all this glory and you don't even appreciate it..."

Okita raised his middle finger at him and smirked, "That's the difference between us, runt. I know what really matters."

Heisuke shook his head, mumbling something under his breath as he left. It didn't take Okita long to prepare. As soon as he was alone, he changed into his fighting shorts that clung tighter than regular athletic shorts and he chucked his shirt where he left his jeans. After, he began to wrap his knuckles, huffing occasionally when the tape didn't align properly but otherwise getting it done quick.

The longer he waited for the okay to head to the main room, the more anxious he became. Anyone of his friends would assume he was nervousâ€"but he was never nervous before a match. If anything, he was always a little overconfident in himself, but that's what separated him from other fighters. He fought like a winner.

It didn't take long for someone to get him from his room and thankfully, he didn't run into any unwanted guests right before. Mentally, he went through the motions of his training. Talking himself over what moves he'd do depending on his opponent's style. It was better than letting his mind wander to her. He would hate to admit it, but Heisuke was right...he wasn't completely sure if she'd show up.

It'd be lucky for his opponent if she was, though. He'd hate to see the outcome of the guy's face if it met his fists when angry. And angry is the nice way he'd put it. \_She'll be here.\_ He thought to himself and he couldn't help but scowl at his thoughts. \_Where's that over\_ \_confidence now? She will be here.\_

He stared out at the crowd that was rowdy and loud as ever. The crowd was definitely bigger and he knew that the next match they would have to change venues from the norm. He'd have to mention it to Hijikata.

As he continued to skim the crowd, his eyes landed on his target. Chizuru stood, albeit uncomfortable and completely out of place in her pale yellow top and skinny jeans, near the front row he had specially laid out for them. It was a perfect spot for them to watch him and for him to keep his unwavering eyes from her.

Okita, having not been spotted by her yet, let his eyes take her in fully. Her jeans hugged her bottom half delightfully that he wished he was closer just so he could stareâ€”stupidly enough. And he could make out cleavage, if just the slightest hint. She looked causal and cozy, and he was sure that it was his favorite look so far.

Usually when she dressed it was a bit more modest and...plain. Like she was purposely trying to blend in rather than stand out. But he liked this outfit way better. The color yellow made her eyes pop and look wider, he could tell even from their distance. All too quickly Chizuru drew her eyes in his direction and he forced himself to keep from waving.

Instead, he played it off. He felt his lips automatically tug into a smirk and he was even more pleased at her blush. He turned his attention to Heisuke, who rolled his eyes at his smirk. He waved his hand at him and Okita turned his attention back to the MC. He was just short of announcing him and he could already feel the sweet hum of excitement and adrenaline working.

It was like a craving he didn't realize he had until it started. The minutes flew by as he reached the stage, as the crowd blurred around him but his opponent and, admittedly Chizuru. His opponent was sloppy from the start. When he threw a punch it was heavy and off centeredâ€”enough to take down some drunkard that was out of control or someone who wasn't expecting it, but not enough for him.

When he purposely let a punch or two hit, they nearly felt like tickles. He was exaggerating, of course, but they hardly did the damage his opponent was most likely hoping for. Okita glared hard at him, keeping his elbows tucked in like he learned obediently. Hijikata and Saito would be beyond pleased considering they were worried about this match.

Okita tried to see where the other's talent was. His speed? Couldn't be, since every time he moved it was as if he was moving through water. His feet dragged slower than his punches. His powerful punches? He'd already busted that possibility. He'd gotten hit worse by the front door. Energy? That was a laugh. They were hardly an hour into the fight and he could hear the guy's lungs gasping for constant air.

Not that his punches were helping \_that\_ matter.

They were practically dancing around each other now. His opponent was stalling, trying to buy some time for his energy to come back or to come up with some zany plan to come out on top. Neither was going to happen because Okita, for one, was not at all tired.

In fact, he was all over it. He could admit that usually he was the one who was sloppy and wild during fights. Always making them entertaining for others and earning himself a lecture for his behavior by just about everyone on his team. But not now. His punches were solid, always making brutal contact with his face or his abdomen area that he left unchecked. His speed was top notch, his feet seemed to have a mind of their own practically skipping around.

His adrenaline was pumping and working in overdrive nowâ€”mostly because he was trying hard to keep the fight to a decent time. It wasn't nearly as fun to knock out the opponent right away and he had a message to deliver. A message that he spent a good deal thinking about. Throughout the fight, he tried hard to keep from glancing in her direction, but he found it more difficult not to.

If anything, she was definitely helping him keep the match entertaining. His opponent was basically done with the exception that he was still standing. He could already hear Hijikata lecturing him on the unnecessary playing about. Okita darted to the right, purposely spun left, which brought Chizuru into his vision, her eyes glued to him with stunned awe then slammed his elbow into the other's back.

The man gasped in pain and buckled to his knees almost instantly, the spot on his back was bright red and angry from the hitâ€”although, Okita didn't \_feel\_ like he hit him that hard. Almost all of his hits towards the end were purposely being pulled back. Hadn't he asked for a challenge...?

He had hoped, before the match started, that he would keep him on his toes like Saito often didâ€”hopefully keep his wandering mind in check, but no. This guy was nothing compared to his Frat brothers on their \_worst\_ night. And he had heard nothing but good things, too.

Regardless, he was pleased that it at least gave him ample changes to glance at Chizuru. So far, his plan was in full blown motion and still, even as he was fighting, kept his shit together. It was such a brilliant plan, really.

\_All this trouble for one girl?\_ A bitter angry voice echoed in his head.

He shut it off immediately. He knew exactly what he was doing. So, yeah, all for one girl. He had yet to meet another girl who was as...unique as she was. He couldn't quite place his finger on it yet, but he knew that once he figured it out he'd be able to leave her alone. For her own good.

At least, he hoped.

Okita brought his attention back to his opponent, still feeling his adrenaline and energy kicking full throttle. The guy, on the other

hand, looked ready to drop at any given moment. He felt like he could just tap him with his index finger and he'd probably go down easily. He was almost tempted to try it, but that wasn't how one finished a fight for an audience or the girl you were trying to impress.

He shot Heisuke a meaningful glance before he side stepped a heavy front hail-Mary type of punch, swiftly bringing his knee up and into his abdomen. He took the second interval to follow up with a just strong enough left hook to knock him back down and, thankfully, out. It took another full second for the crowd around him to come to terms with the outcome, half a second for the announcer to jump back onto the stage and come in between them and a nanosecond for Okita to feel the remaining, the satisfying and tantalizing, adrenaline as it started to seep out of him. It was done.

Another win.

His muscles started to ache in a triumphant way and he couldn't help the smug smirk that felt permanent. The announcer shot him an approving look, most likely because he was cashing in on him, and then proceeded to lift his arm in the air.

"Winner by flat out, knock out"Soujiiii Okitaaaa!" The megaphone he screamed into just barely managed to be heard over the loud roar of his 'fans.' He used the term lightly, since he hated it. Okita knew that fans were fickle, considering no one cheered for him up until he started winning his matches"which, admittedly, was only once but regardless. He was unknown and they hated him on the spot for taking over the last champ from their Fraternity. But once the people saw his mean punches and his ferocity while fighting, they knew that he was a force to be reckoned with. And that was that.

It wasn't long before his so called fans rushed the cement stage, just short of trampling over his knocked out opponent. The little fans he had, were quick to surround him and haul him up to his feet. His face was already swelling and bright red, blood trailing out of his mouth and left nostril. The sight would've shook up any other sane person...but Okita never claimed to be such.

Instead, he felt a broad smile grace his face and a sense of enlightenment overcome him. Like everything that was bothering him before the fight, meant nothing. The sight was a victory for him, just as his knuckles"which were red and a little chafed now, from underneath the bandages"were. This was one thing that would never change.

Fans of all kinds were pressing against him as each and everyone tried to congratulate him. Each were unfamiliar faces and he tried hard not to show his annoyance"after all, it was each and every one of their twisted hobbies that paid for nearly everything he owned and the Fraternity had. One of the very few perks of the gig.

Girls, Sororities and not, pushed up against his sweaty front, boobs nearly pushed up to their chins for emphasis tried hard to shout over one another, asking him if he needed anything. An ice pack, a shoulder rub, a full body...? And the guys that surrounded him were just as bad, trying to act like his best friend as they jostled him around"did he need a drink, did he need some food, did he need that last girl's phone number...?

As if he needed \_any\_ help with \_that.\_

Before he could even open his mouthâ€”all too happy to tell them off by this point, Sanosuke and Shinpachi managed to bustle through the thick crowd and push them back significantly. His shoulders relaxed then, muscles finally able to sigh a breath of un-claustrophobic peace.

"Back up, you vultures, back up!" Shouted Shinpachi, his face set in a tight scowl and arms outstretched.

Sanosuke shot his friend a smile, "What my good friend is trying to say, is that our star fighter needs to get some rest and fresh airâ€”that is, if you want him to continue winning the way he has!"

Okita resisted the urge to roll his eyes. But he did have to admit, Sanosuke knew how to settle down a crowd. He always managed to say just what they wanted to hear. Usually saved him from a lot of would-be incidents. Talking to crowds weren't usually his thing. Sweet talking girls were. And yelling.

He turned his attention away from the cluster of people and searched for the familiar brown eyed girl that held his attention throughout the entire fight. His eyes swept the entire place a few times over before his face settled into a deep scowl that would've rivaled Hijikata's on any bad day. \_Where the fuck were they?\_

He sighed roughly, dragging a hand through his sweat slicked hair. Okita only hoped that Heisuke understood his meaningful glance, but now that he thought about it, that was giving the kid \_way\_ too much credit. This time, he did roll his eyes and he shook his head. Why hadn't he reiterated the whole idea to him before hand?

Sanosuke glanced over his shoulder at him, "If you don't leave now, you'll miss Heisuke and the girlsâ€”one of them said she was a friend."

Okita gave his friend a smirk and nodded, "You two got it handled here then?" he wasn't sure why he bothered asking, he already knew the answer. Shinpachi's expression seemed to mimic his thoughts exactly.

"Dude, get the fuck out of here!" He gave him a wide smile and thumbs up.

Sanosuke nodded, "Yeah, before Heisuke gets the wrong idea with those two girls..."

Okita knew he was only jokingâ€”especially since Heisuke could hardly put the moves properly on one girl much less two at the same time but still, the joke didn't make him laugh like it should've. \_Like it should've? More like how it use to. \_He pushed the angry voice in his head and instead, he forced a tight smile and quickly turned away.

His body no longer felt flushed or sweaty, but cool and almost chilled. Did Sanosuke's comment really upset him that much? Shouldn't he know how it was making him feel? He pressed his lips together tightly and shook his head once more. Okita picked up his pace and

hurried down to the room he had told Heisuke to take the girls after the match.

Quickly his heart started to pound as he reached the door just a hallway down and a turn to the left from where the fight was held. Just beyond the door would be Chizuru and he could finally talk to her and hopefully...his plan would've worked. That is, if he hadn't mistaken her expression the last couple days. She was rather easy to read, but at the same time, it was all so weird to have someone shoot him down for something as small as a friendship.

What was it with him and revisiting that moment? For the hundredth time in a row, Okita shook his head of the thought and pushed the door open. Instantly he was jumped by an unfamiliar girl with large purple eyes and short brown hair, "Oh, Chizuru you're bacâ€" She cut herself off as her hands circled around Okita's bare biceps. She blushed and took a respectable step back. "Oh, sorry about that..." she mumbled, her eyes flickering over his shoulder before her own shoulders sagged a bit.

She turned away from him and walked back into the room, "I thought you were someone else..." She quickly turned back to him, face flushed again. "Not that you're \_not \_good company or anything!" She smiled brightly at him.

Okita raised his hand and shrugged, "It's fine," he glanced around the room. Other than him and the girl he remembered being Chizuru's friend and roommateâ€"his secret ticket to get Chizuru to come, the room was empty. He tried hard not to frown, but he was failing. \_What the fuck?\_ "Uhâ€"

Before he could ask, she turned towards him again. "I'm Sen, by the way. Friends with Chizuru." She sat on the metal chair and tilted her head. "You did an awesome job out there! It was just...\_wow\_" Sen laughed.

"Cool," he mumbled, opening his mouth to ask when she cut him off once again.

"I can't believe we actually were able to get in!" She turned her eyes to him again, "All thanks to you, actually! If Chizuru didn't mention you, I'm sure we would've been kicked out before Heisuke backed us up!"

Okita was just about two seconds short of telling her to shut up when what she said caught his attention. He smirked, "Oh?" he asked, wanting her to elaborate. He was insanely curious about \_this\_.

Sen nodded emphatically, beaming. "Oh yeah!" she sat up straight and her hands started to move about as she dove into the whole story about Sen dragging Chizuru to the underground event after being invited by some guy in her class, sneaking through the window, getting caught and Chizuru saving their butts from getting hauled out by Sanosuke and Shinpachi.

Okita had the strangest urge to laugh, but didn't feel she would understandâ€"not that he did either. But he could only imagine how she would've handled it. He knew that he'd have to bring up the topic when he was around them again.

"Interesting." He finally said when she finished and she nodded again. "Where are they now?" he asked, bringing his attention back to the current.

Sen's smile waned a little bit and he instantly went back to feeling rigid. That little pest better not have done something...or was currently doing something. Or worse, he better not have let her leave. "She had a headache and asked if she could get fresh air. Heisuke was kind enough to take her outside." She glanced down at her cellphone and her lips pursed, "She seemed pretty odd when they left...and it's been a while. But I wouldn't worry. I'm sure Heisuke will watch her until she feels better to come back in."

Okita didn't even answer her, but instead grabbed his jeans from the table in the corner of the classroom and left. "Wait here." He tossed over his shoulder before the door closed behind him. Like hell he wouldn't worry. Unless he saw her, right in front of him, his mind wasn't going to stop with all the possibilities.

Not once slowing his pace, he slipped his jeans on over his shorts. It was a rather amazing feat, but Okita managed to do without falling on his ass or face. He was on a mission and the more time he wasted, the more the end goal of his whole plan was crumbling.

He hoped, for Heisuke's sake, that she was only outside getting fresh air. Or there would be hell to pay.

\* \* \*

><p>Chizuru breathed deeply and closed her eyes against the cool night air. In a lot of ways, being outside with so much darkness and barely any light by the school building reminded her of that horrible first day. Sometimes she expected to see someone coming at her with malice and cruel intentions, but that was all in her head. She never realized how much that event had an effect on her until she stood outside, virtually by herself.<p>

Her eyes peeked over at Heisuke who leaned against the brick wall, eyes closed in thought. She breathed a sigh of relief. No, she wasn't alone. Heisuke wouldn't let her go outside by herself—which she had adamantly told him she'd be fine, but was now glad he insisted. She couldn't picture what she'd be doing right now if he did let her go out by herself.

She shivered with the thought. Sometimes her own mind was her worst enemy. It knew exactly what she feared and that wasn't good. Heisuke opened his eyes and gave her a gentle smile. Chizuru was very grateful for all that he had done so far for her and Sen. From the moment he helped them from getting thrown out to when the match was over. He was quick to escort them out of the pushing throng of bodies and noise into a 'fighter/personal-only' sanctioned part of the school where she saw Okita standing by before the fight, so it was refreshingly quiet.

"You feeling better?" he asked, concern making him furrow his brow.

Automatically, Chizuru's fingers lifted to her temples. She did have a headache the moment the match was over, from her own adrenaline mixed with anxiety leaving her body so quickly, but she had feigned

it worse than it actually was. She just needed some air to think. Considering Heisuke mentioned Okita would come to the room soon.

She just needed a minute to compose herself before that happened.

He was so magnificent throughout the fight. The way his body moved fluidly, the way his muscles seemed to expand and contract with every movement, and the way he seemed to know what the other would do before he did it. His mind and body were so in tune with one another that it made her feel...alive.

And whether it was in her mind or not, every time he managed to glance her at her throughout, she felt a spark inside her. Warmth would spread through her veins and she felt wired, almost as if she was the one fighting instead of him. She was riveted by the sight, rather than shocked like she had been the first few minutes. Her anxiety only came about when the opponent managed to sneak a few shots in on him, which thankfully, wasn't too often.

When the fight was done, Chizuru had the strongest urge to hoot and holler like everyone else and, embarrassingly, the overwhelming desire to run up to him and throw herself at him, sweaty body and all. She could only imagine what he would feel like if she did...Chizuru shook her head, blinking her eyes from the lusty haze.

Yeah, she really did need the fresh air. The cool breeze did wonders to her flushed face.

"Yeah, I'm good." She smiled at Heisuke, "I think I'm ready to go inside now."

No sooner did she say that then the metal door swung open and slammed hard into the brick wall. They both jumped, Chizuru making a small squeak and Heisuke quickly rushed over, fists raised and ready. Okita, still shirtless but with jeans onâ€"unbuttonedâ€"passed through, his demeanor calm and unperturbed, as if he didn't shove the doors too hard.

Heisuke sighed loudly, his shoulders sagged in relief. "Holy fuck, dude!" he sighed, giving Chizuru a small smile. "You scared the shit out of us! I thought it was some Choshu fuck coming around to start trouble..."

Okita gave a hard look at Heisuke who automatically snapped his jaw shut. An unspoken conversation went between them and without another word, Heisuke took it as his cue to leave. He gave Chizuru a small smile before he headed back inside to Sen, she hoped. When the metal door clicked softly behind him, she tore her gaze from the door and swiveled up to Okita.

He stared down at her, his expression blank but a faint smirk on his lips. She wasn't sure what he was doing outside and she shifted on her feet nervously. Hadn't she come to the conclusion that she was ready to face him? That she was going to apologize to him...? She chickened out last time, but now was her chance. That, or he was going to call her out on showing up when he was mad at her.

"I'm sorry." She blurted suddenly, causing him to stare at her far more intently than he had been. His green eyes were vividly green



beneath the lights and with the growing darkness, it was a great contrast. His muscles weren't as hard as they had been when he was fighting, now he seemed relaxed and at ease.

Okita only raised an eyebrow at her apology and she blushed. "I mean for...what I had said..." She frowned and watched as he reached into his front pocket and pulled a cigarette. His eyes never once left hers as he lit it and took a deep drag. She could smell the menthol and she wasn't disgusted by it as she normally would've been. "Sorry for what I said last time...for, um, making you upset with...me." Her eyes couldn't stray from the cigarette between his lips and then the trail of smoke.

He lazily pulled the cigarette from his mouth and got closer. Chizuru tried hard not to appear frazzled by it, she didn't want to offend him any further. What good would her apology have been if she did that? Now that he stood a few feet away from her, she could easily smell the menthol mixed with his scent. A forestry scent mingled with the minty tang of Malbaros. Odd combination, but not at all off putting. Her eyes were nearly level with his bare body and now, she could see all the glorious dips and grooves of his well muscled fighter body.

Admittedly, she had thought a few times about how his body would look beneath his shirt and it was way better than her daydreams, even better than Kazama's. She blushed at the thought and he smirked at her knowingly having caught her stare. Why was she openly ogling his body like that? She was definitely giving him the wrong idea and that was bad.

Chizuru forced her eyes to look up at him, his eyes still bright and almost warm. It was better than the looks she had been receiving earlier in the day and week. Could it have been possible for him to have gotten over it when he fought? She tilted her head to the side, curious with the thought. He raised his eyebrow again, why wasn't he saying anything?

"You shouldn't smoke..." she blurted once again. She snapped her mouth shut and mentally scolded herself. What the hell was she thinking saying that? This was collage, he was a grown guy and knew the consequences of his actions. But really, he was making her nervous and she apparently had a bad case of word vomit. Meaning, anything that she could say...she mostly likely would say it, without thought. "It's not healthy...and um...you're not still...mad at me, are you?" She looked up at him and gave him a tentative smile. "I mean, I've been meaning to apologize but, Iâ€"it's been so hard to work up the nerve to say something and considering the way you've, um, acting it's..." Chizuru trailed off and sighed deeply. "Are you just going to let me keep rambling on like an idiot?"

At that, Okita laughed. A long deep, chest rumbling laugh that embarrassed Chizuru, her face blushing brightly and fiercely. He leaned back and shook his head, his laughter quieting into chuckles. His smirk spread wider and his eyes seemed to glisten they way they did before he was mad at her. The sight warmed her immensely and she tried hard not to appear happy about it.

Considering he was laughing at her, she knew she should've appeared upset but she found herself softly giggling. Okita raised his hand and he brushed her hair that she guessed was out of place, slowly he

let his fingers glide through her strands before he brushed them off her shoulder, the tips of his fingers brushing her exposed collar bone. She could easily imagine his slightly rough finger tips gliding down the open part of her shirt.

The touch was intimateâ€”but innocent and Chizuru couldn't help the blush that graced her face again and the way her heart reacted to it. Her reaction to it shook her to her core. If she were honest with herself, she knew that Kazama's touch or kisses never had her heart racing like that. Maybe once, when they shared their first kiss but that was more so the anticipation building up to it rather than the action itself.

Chizuru pushed the thought out of her mind and Okita dropped his hand quickly, his eyes darkening just slightly as he shifted his eyes away from her. "Not only do you apologize, but then you lecture me all in the same breathe?" He shook his head, "That's definitely a first!"

She opened her mouth to object and to apologize again for doing so. What the hell was she thinking?! Who did that kind of thing? She really couldn't be held accountable for the things she said while she was rambling.

"You did nothing wrong," he said shrugging and throwing his unfinished cigarette to the ground. His foot swiftly crushed it and he drew his eyes back to her. "Believe it or not, but I don't often smoke. I'm more of a...social smoker, if you will."

"A social smoker...?" she asked, tipping her head to the side not really sure she believed him.

Okita shrugged again and took out his pack of cigarettes, shoving them at her open hands. "Yeah, check it." He gestured to the pack and she flicked open the top. Inside the beat up pack was a total of 15 cigarettes left and she furrowed her brow. "A pack has 20 of them. I smoke one whenever I'm stressedâ€”which, as you can probably guess is not all too often, or when I'm angry and can't release it in other...healthier ways."

His eyes flickered to the closed door and Chizuru could've sworn she saw his muscles tense for a moment. The packet gave off that menthol smell she smelled off of him and she tried hard not to take a big whiff of that. She was sure the cigarettes alone would not do it justice. Instead, she closed the top and handed them back to him.

Okita grinned and shoved them back in his pocket, "I pretty much just like the motion, I don't know how else to explain it...but I buy one at the beginning of the school year, if I need to. I've had this particular pack for about a year and a half now."

Chizuru pursed her lips, "Have you been particularly stressed so far...?" she asked. \_Or angry?\_ She did so that thought out loud, but she knew he had been...but had it been because of her? She tried hard not to frown and he seemed to catch her unanswered question.

"I guess. My own fault really," He shrugged and turned back towards her. "But back to your original question, do I forgive you? Am I still mad at you? Why didn't I stop you from your rambling?" He

chuckled again and she noticed his hand twitched just slightly, before he brought it up and brushed his hair back. "Because it's more fun this way. That's why." His green eyes sparkled again as they connected with hers. "And yes, I do forgive you and I won't be mad at you anymore on one condition."

She stared up at him unblinking and waiting. Her heart was racing now and, despite the chill, her body felt extremely hot. What was his condition? What did he want? Was she really going to do what he wanted simply to gain his forgiveness? She pursed her lips and slowly nodded. Yes, strangely enough she was. Chizuru trusted him, because she didn't feel scared of him.

Even after watching him fight, even after hearing Kazama say how dangerous he supposedly was, she didn't believe it. Her gut was practically yelling that he was goodâ€"wild, but not a bad person. Heisuke was also kind and if he didn't really like Okita, he wouldn't say half the things he did about himâ€"even if he was pledging.

"Okay, what's the condition?" she asked.

Okita's smirk formed instantly into a grin, "You be my friend...it's hard enough on a man's pride to ask again, but I am because I think it'll be fun." He crossed his arms, biceps hardening and she fought to keep her eyes trained on his. "And I'm a fun-loving kind of guy."

This time she didn't have any qualms about denying his friendship. She had been on the opposite side of his cold, angry side and she didn't like it. She much rather preferred the guy who was always smiling and teasing than that one. The quiet side distracted her more than his normal self, or at least the normal she had gotten to know for that short time.

Chizuru was glad he was asking again and that he didn't seem to want to give up. Could she really be good friends with him? Especially with Kazama's distaste for him? She smiled up at him, already having made up her mind.

"Alright. Friends it is." Instinctively her smile widened and her stomach began to flutter in response. It was weird to feel that way, but her heart and mind were picturing her saying something more profound than 'friends.' It was a dangerous thought and feeling.

But a deeper part of her knew that she was doing nothing wrong.

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><p><strong>an: Read and Review! :) Love knowing what you guys think!  
\*\*

## 6. Strategic

\_AU. OkitaXChizuru Romance.\_

\*\*A/n: Update! :) Happy 4th, all! Enjoy!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Crazy<strong>

**\*\*Chapter 6: Strategic\*\***

\* \* \*

><p>Okita couldn't resist the urge to smileâ€”really, he had the overpowering urge to pick up her small body and toss her in the air or something...but he figured that was much too much. So instead he stuck out his hand and he lowered his head slightly.<p>

"Shake on it." He told her, only half joking. A part of him needed to see just how serious she was about this, because he didn't do anything halfway. Whether she realized it or not, she was going to a constant part of his life now. Fraternity affairs, sorority whatever, and underground specials. All of that went unspoken of course.

He watched, carefully, as Chizuru's brown eyes bounced between his eyes and his outstretched hand. Confusion trickled into her eyes and creased her brow, but then amusement and laughter brightened them. Her face eased its tension and she broke out into a sweet smile. One that seemed to do what his opponent failed to do, knock him off his feet.

Chizuru stuck out her hand and shook it, "...is this really happening?" she asked, eyeing their hands as slight giggle escaping and a small blush creeping.

Okita gave a one sided shrug and kept shaking her handâ€”liking the feel of her hand in his. It was delicateâ€”she was delicate. Her eyes went up to his again and she shook her head, laughing before pulling her hand back.

"Just had to make sure you were serious, you know?" he casually hooked his thumbs into his jean pockets before he rocked back on his heels. "How are you feeling, by the way?"

Chizuru paused slightly before dawning crossed her features. She gave him a small smile, her fingers traveling up to her temple. "Good. Better." She wrapped her arms around herself. "I'm ready to head in, actually. Sen's probably worried..."

Okita tried hard not to purse his lips or seem disappointed, but he knew that it was getting pretty late and it was technically still a school night. If his plan hadn't worked out so marvelously, he was sure he'd skip tomorrow's morning class for a few days. But, of course, it did work. He nodded and turned back towards the door.

"She was." He held the door open as Chizuru followed him, thanking him quietly as she passed through the open door. "She also happened to mention your earlier predicament. Didn't I say before how knowing my name would come in handy?" He teased.

He watched as she ducked her head, trying to use her hair to shield her face from her blush. It didn't work out nearly as much as she probably thought it was. "Yeah, it was...I panicked I guess." She shrugged and looked up at him sheepishly, "I realize that it was kind

of a low blow and now that I know that you were the main feature tonight, I realize how really...\_stupid \_saying you invited me was. It was a wonder those guys didn't throw us out sooner."

Okita chuckled, "They're just doing their part," He gestured the building, "I'm sure you can imagine the shit ton of trouble we could get in if...unwanted guests were to show up. Despite the crowd, this is very hush-hush."

Chizuru nodded softly and he purposely paused. She noticed he stopped almost instantly and she glanced at him over her shoulder. She tipped her head to the, her face pinching with confusion. He walked up to her and leaned down towards her, Chizuru's eyes flickered away from his and she took a small step back.

Okita let it slide, knowing he'd have to take it slow when it came to invading her personal space. He had no boundaries, really, and she'd know that soon enough if she already didn't. "I know we just established our friendship, but I'm already asking a favor...keep this whole spiel under wraps. We don't need any Student Council President hanging around. No offense."

He was always blunt and to the point, but he even surprised himself with how hard straightforward it was. Shock filled her eyes and her mouth opened in a silent 'oh' before she quickly nodded. "None taken," she mumbled, a forced smile on her lips. "I understand how you would want anonymity..." She shrugged causally, but Okita could also tell it was forced.

But even with her forced smile and casualness, he knew he could trust her not to say anything. He wasn't really sure what it was. Okita could already hear the guys back at the Frat house chewing him out over it.

"Good. I knew I could count on you." He turned away from her with a smirk and continued on back to the room. She instantly followed, quickly picking up her pace to catch up to his side.

"Can I ask you something...?" she asked, just short of reaching the door with the others inside.

Okita turned towards her, giving a slight nod. "Shoot."

Chizuru pursed her lips and she shifted slightly, her eyes bouncing to the door and back to him again. He was almost sure she was going to drop it but, she didn't. "How do you know you can trust me?" she asked, "I mean, considering you know who my boyfriend is and how, well, how risky it is to have me come here. There was a 50-50 chance I'd either keep quiet or feel obligated to tell him."

He grinned down at her, amused and even a little surprised. One moment he was sure she was this shy always embarrassed girl, but then she'd come around with the most perceptive and even snarky things. A friendship with her was definitely a good call.

Okita cocked his head to the side, pretending to think about her question and she smiled. "Well, I'm \_not \_completely sure if you will or won't." He shrugged and chuckled, running his hand through his hair. "When the guys realize this, they'll throw a fucking fit. Heisuke's already said his share and when he realizes..." He shook

his head and glanced down at her. "But I have a feeling you'll honor this. Call it a gut feeling, I guess. Kind of like knowing this friendship is probably the best decision I've ever made."

He leaned down again and this time, she only moved back half a step. Improvement in such a little time. That was good. "If I'm wrong, then I'll just have to kill you." He whispered casually, "You've seen my skills twice now, so you know how deadly I am."

Okita felt her shiver and he pulled away, smiling down at her as if he hadn't just threatened her life. Of course he wasn't serious. He'd be shocked if he could ever feel quit feeling like he had to constantly watch out for her. Her eyes were wide, shocked again, and she blinked a few times, as if not really believing what he just said to her. But shock was better than fear, so at least there was that.

He decided to ease her mind, regardless. The last thing he wanted was for her to actually get scared. "Don't take me so seriously!" he reached over and pulled at the tips of her hair. "I'm kidding. I'm not completely ruthless, you know."

Chizuru's expression seemed to relax that final step and she immediately started laughing. She reached up and swatted at his hand away from her hair. "I know you are," she stated between giggles. "It's just... I guess, I'm not that surprised. I feel like I should be honored that you threatened to kill me or something. Isn't that something fans want said to them?"

Okita raised his eyebrow, "You saying you're a fan of mine now?" he asked

She blushed and ducked her head, shrugging and trying to appear casual again. "I'll have to go to another match to find out...and you're not as ruthless as you think you are..." she mumbled very softly, he almost didn't hear her. That shocked him, more than he let on. How could she possibly say that after watching him? Twice now, really. He didn't want to acknowledge it, but hearing her say that was somewhat relieving.

Not everyone he knew believed that and it was nice hearing someone say different.

Chizuru offered him a smile and turned away, opening the door. Okita stared at the spot she stood in just seconds ago, lost in thought. In the span of 15 minutes, she practically rendered him speechless. What was with her? He faintly heard her friend and Heisuke talking to her and he was quick to shake himself out of his thoughts.

Whatever it was, he liked it. For once, he felt challenged and the adrenaline that kicked in was by far the strongest he'd ever felt.

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><p>"Looks like this is your stop then,"<p>

Chizuru didn't have to look up at Okita to know he was staring down at her. Since their talk earlier, he hadn't really stopped looking at her. But of course, where else was he suppose to look? She tried hard not to appear tense or nervous, his presence was going to take time

for her to get use to. It wasn't Okita's fault that he practically oozed intensity. It was a bit unnerving at times.

Like right now.

She tipped her head up, she wasn't sure what was going on in his head, but he was significantly...softer. Not that it made any sense. Was it possible to appear softer but intense at the same time? But there was no mistaking it, the edge that she usually saw lurking deep within his eyes were no longer there—hence softer.

"Yeah," she mumbled, feeling strangely awake. Her stomach also seemed to feel cold, was she really dreading saying good night to him that much? Chizuru forced her eyes to look at Sen who, by the slightly pinched look on Heisuke's face, was still talking his ear off. The sight made the sinking feeling in her stomach lighten.

What was she doing allowing herself to get so worked up about over a new friendship? Okita was a friend. Friend. Nothing more. With that solid thought, she was able to turn to Okita with more confidence than she had earlier.

"See them to their floor, Heisuke. Got it?" Okita gave Heisuke a stern look that made Heisuke roll his eyes. Chizuru couldn't stop the smile then, the two acted more like siblings than friends. She was curious how all the frat brothers acted once they got together.

Heisuke had briefly mentioned them on the walk back to the dorm. Saying that they were each wild in their own right and beyond so when put together. Sen immediately dragged his attention after that, asking him question after question about each of them. She had heard tidbits of them, but no one seemed to know much else.

"Do I look like a flake?" he asked, crossing his arms. "I got this, douche. You should be back at the House now...you know how much he hates to wait on you."

This time Okita rolled his eyes, but it was quick before that smug smile was back on his face. "He's already waited this long, a few more minutes won't kill him." He shrugged and turned back to Chizuru, who couldn't help but admire their friendship—despite the insults and glares hurled at each other. "Guess I'll see you tomorrow, Chizuru." He winked at her, causing her to inadvertently blush before he quickly bid his goodbyes to everyone else and turned away.

Her heart was thundering as she watched him walk away, her stomach fluttering with the thought of seeing him tomorrow for first period. Chizuru finally forced herself to turn away, her fingers absentmindedly ran over her chest right above her racing heart. She couldn't really explain it to herself, but she liked the feeling.

When she slowly brought her gaze up to Heisuke and Sen, she caught her friend's look—a knowing curious one that embarrassed and sort of scared Chizuru. It's like she knew her briefly traitorous thoughts and heart. Immediately she dropped her hand and gave her a weak smile.

"I'm...tired." she heard herself mumble to her and Sen only nodded,

instantly looping her arm through hers. The look on her face wiped and replaced with it's ordinary cheerfulness. She was still reeling from the earlier event. During that short walk up to their dorm room, she sympathized with Heisuke—who had to endure much more of her excited babble about the fight.

He was a nice guy for not telling her to shut up and being patient. With a nod and a good night, he watched them enter their room safely and like Okita requested before he left. Chizuru instantly dropped to her bed, hoping Sen would catch that she wasn't in the mood to talk anymore. She wasn't sure what she would tell her if she asked her about her thoughts on Okita. Chizuru honestly hoped she didn't catch it and the look she gave her was all in her head.

She should feel guilty for even entertaining the thought of Okita as anything more than a friend when she had Kazama—even if it was just for a second. She was in a good relationship, with a good man who had a very promising future and who cared about her. Things were going good for her. Okita wasn't mad at her anymore, she was closer to Kazama now, and she had a great roommate/friend. She closed her eyes and thought that over and over until it became a mantra.

Things are good, things are good. \_

When she opened her eyes, she noticed Sen was looking at her curiously again. When she was quiet, it worried her considering she was hardly silent for more than a second at a time. Sen tipped her head to the side, "That Okita sure is...different, huh?" she asked, eyebrows furrowing slightly in thought or was it awe?

Either way, Chizuru wasn't sure she liked that look anymore than the curious or knowing one she gave her earlier. Sen's lips parted into a small almost shy smile. "He definitely lives up to the hype," She shivered and stood up. "And when he's fresh from a fight, oh! I really like that look...imagine how the girls around here would be if they saw that side of him too!"

Chizuru tried hard to appear not too interested or upset at her words. Should she be surprised that Sen had that sort of reaction to him? He was a good looking guy and she had to admit she couldn't necessarily blame her for it. Any living breathing, rational female would. But that didn't mean she liked hearing it. She pursed her lips and simply nodded at her friend.

It would be better if Sen showed interest, maybe then she could keep her mind focused on friendship only. For the sake of everyone involved. Chizuru wanted to beat her head. Preferably with a book or something. Was she admitting to herself, already, that she has unacknowledged feelings for him? She shook her head lightly and shifted onto her side, reaching for her phone to text Kazama.

Maybe it was guilt. Guilt for lying to Kazama and a slight punishment from higher beings for doing so. That made sense, right? Sen crouched beside Chizuru and she smiled down at her, "Don't worry about it," she told her, tapping her forehead lightly. Chizuru felt her eyes widen but didn't say anything. Was she that obvious? "Well, I'm going to shower. Night!" Sen popped up, grabbed pajama's and her shower kit before leaving Chizuru alone with her thoughts.

It happened so fast and suddenly that Chizuru wasn't really sure it



happened. The silence was louder than the noise from the fight had been, almost weighing and she was sure her ears were still ringing. For a few minutes she debated calling Kazama...or not. On the plus, hearing his voice would calm her, but on the other end she wasn't so sure she wanted to speak to him just yet.

Guilt won out and she had his number dialed, the phone pressed to her ear as she waited. He answered on the fourth ring, his voice smooth but a little huffy. Did she wake him? Her eyes swung over to the clock on her night stand and she mentally cursed herself for calling him at nearly midnight. Was it really that late already? Where did the time go?

\_Time flies when you're having fun with Okita...\_

The thought irked her and she sighed softly into the phone, "Hey, Kazama." She rolled onto her back and tried to sound light, like she wasn't at all off balance with her train of thoughts. "Sorry for the late call,"

Kazama gave another small short sigh and she frowned, hating the thought that she bothered him. He was a busy student after all and she was sure he had an early morning to attend to. "That's alright." He finally added. "Are you alright?" he asked, voice a little clearer now.

Chizuru nodded softly before she realized he couldn't see her gesture. She stopped. "Yeah, just wanted to call and say...hey." She squeezed her eyes, hating how stupid that sounded. It's not like she could talk to him about the fight. She promised and he wouldn't understand why she went in the first place.

"...hey?" he asked skeptically. She could easily picture his face, a scowl gracing his features.

She almost nodded again but stopped herself. "Yeah..."

"Chizuru, are you drunk...?" He asked, his tone taking on a harsher tone. "Do I need to pick you up from somewhere?"

Chizuru blinked a few times, shocked that he came to that conclusion. It was almost comical, really. But who did that on a Tuesday night? She was anything but that. "No, I'm not drunk Kazama..." she sighed, "I just wanted to hear your voice, I guess. I haven't talked to you all day."

She was met with silence and Chizuru briefly wondered if he hung up on her. She almost pulled the phone away to check if he did or not, but he huffed out another breath. More annoyed than the previous ones. "Chizuru, I understand but do you realize what time it is?" he lowered his voice, "I have a very early morning to attend to, so if you don't have anything important to say right now than I'll talk to you at a more \_decent\_ hour."

Tears stung the corners of Chizuru's eyes and she found herself nodding, this time not bothering to stop herself. "Yeah, you're right. Sorryâ€"

"We'll talk later. Good night." With that, the line went dead and Chizuru held the phone tightly in her hand. Slowly she lowered the

phone, wiped the tears from her face and rolled back onto her side. So that was that. She honestly should've known better than to attempt to call him at the time, but she hoped that he would've been able to talk to her. Reassure her, somehow, without her having to explain to him.

But he wasn't a mind reader and she couldn't expect that of him. Especially if she didn't tell him what was plaguing her. How could she tell him that she was quite possibly infatuated with someone other than him? Or about her new friendship with Okita? He had already told her his thoughts on the subject and specifically told her to stay away.

She hoped that she'd be able to tell him soon. Chizuru didn't want any secrets between them, communication was key and she had never lied to him before. She didn't want to start into that now. This was suppose to be the time of their young lives. She didn't want to form bad habits. Just as she was about to doze off, feeling a dull ache that begged for sleep, her phone chimed softly from under her pillow.

Chizuru always placed her phone there with a back up alarm, just in case she slept through her other one. Her eyes widened and she quickly pulled her phone up, unlocking her screen and bringing up her notification. A part of her, a major part, hoped that it was Kazama apologizing but it wasn't. Rather, it was a social media notification, telling her that she had a friend request from a Souji Okita.

Silently, she read and reread the message. The deep ache numbed instantly and she found she was smiling at her screen. Within a few swipes, she accepted the request, set her phone back to it's place under her pillow and tried to reach that sleep that now seemed far away again.

Not even two minutes after she accepted did her phone chime again with another notification. This time she didn't hope for Kazama and smiled widely when she began to read the IM she received from Okita.

\_Chizuru-\_\_

\_Thanks, a whole bunch, for accepting this friend request so promptly and at this late of hour. \_

\_It was a test and you passed. \_

\_Kudos to you! Now you may go to bed with reassurance! \_

\_Sincerely, (your new, very good, very awesome, very handsome friend)\_

\_Okita \_

Chizuru couldn't help the giggle or two that slipped from her mouth. She slapped a hand over her mouth and glanced across the room before remembering that Sen was still showering, if not finishing up. She didn't want her to catch her still up and texting, but she couldn't resist messaging back.

\_ Okita, \_

\_You're very welcome. I was going to wait on accepting, but felt this sense that it needed to be handled right away. My instincts never fail, plus I excel in tests so I wasn't worried. \_

\_Is this the sort of friendship where I'm constantly in tests? \_

\_& I will go to bed when you go to bed. So...go to bed. (Now that you have successfully tested me and what not) \_

\_Yours truly, (your just as new, very nice, and very new fan/friend)\_

\_Chizuru\_

Truthfully, Chizuru deleted and retyped the short message a few times over before she felt she worded it perfectly. It took her a lot longer to reply than normal and she almost didn't send it, not wanting to seem like she was eager or anythingâ€"but then figured that was silly to think at all. It just so happened that she was still awake.

And it if were any one of her friends, she would've been just as prompt. With that, she easily hit send and then immediately began to worry. That was short lived though, because the door to the dorm opened and she instantly threw herself down, holding her phone close and squeezing her eyes shut.

She didn't want Sen to see she was still awake, she wasn't so sure she'd be able to lie her way through what she was still doing up and she sure as heck didn't want to tell her about her conversation with Kazama. The thought brought back the earlier sense of sadness and she rolled onto her stomach.

Chizuru heard Sen go quiet for a moment, before sheâ€"unsuccessfullyâ€"tried to tip toe around the room. After five minutes of the loudest tip-toeing Chizuru had ever heard, she finally heard Sen's bed squeak as she laid down on it. It took another ten minutes or so to finally hear Sen's breathing turn light and even.

Slowly, Chizuru pulled out her phone and turned the volume off, just as another message popped up on her screen and buzzed in her hands. She bit her lip to keep from letting out a giggle. Why was it that this made her so happy? She didn't give herself time to over think it and instead opened the message.

\_CHIZURU, \_

\_I BET YOU ARE WONDERING WHY I'M WRITING IN CAPS, AREN'T YA? WELL, I'M ASSUMING YOU DIDN'T FULLY READ THE LAST ONE AS I CLEARLY MENTIONED THAT . .BED. AS IN FIRST.\_

\_AS IN NOW. \_

\_RIGHT NOW. \_

\_DAMMIT, CHIZURU, STOP READING AND GO TO SLEEP! \_

—...—

\_Okay, well, obviously I can't stop you from doing what you're going to doâ€"even though I am right. (Always am, too.) And you make a valid point on the whole, I go to bed then you will thing. Tells me you aren't a pushover and won't let people walk all over you. \_

\_Now back to your question. Is this the kind of friendship where I am constantly testing you? Perhaps. I can't out-rightly say so, as that would defeat the purpose of it. And that's no fun if I tell you the answer in advance, would it? : ) You will come to know that I'm am a fun loving kind of guy. \_

\_I am also pleased to have it in writing that you are now calling yourself a fan of mine. You flatter me deeply and I know expect to see you at all the games ring-side. And I mean like, all of them...or at least like, 9/10! (Or however many the season may bring) That is, if you want to keep calling yourself my fan. \_

\_I will also will accept panties if you can't make it to 9/10 matches. ; ) But anything more and we'd be dangerously crossing the line of our newly formed friendship! \_

\_Okita (still the greatest, awesomest person/friend around)\_

Chizuru dropped her head back onto the pillow, pressed her cell phone to chest and let out the smallest sigh she could without disturbing Sen. If she had any doubts about her decision of being friends with him, they were all gone now and long forgotten. How could she have ever doubted his intentions?

She smiled to herself, glad she had a change of heart when it came to him. She idly glanced at the clock and then back at her phoneâ€"she knew he was right when he said she should sleep, because she should. Chizuru may not have an early morning like Kazama, but she still had a class in the morning. She wanted to be able to just say good night and roll over, but she felt too wired.

She wanted to keep messaging him because it was fun. It was a rare thing to connect with someone right away. Chizuru rolled over onto her side and opened her screen box, already messaging him back. She knew she was in for a long night.

Chizuru dragged her head up from the desk at the sound of a Styrofoam cup being slide into her open hands. Her eyes widened at the cup and then up to Okita's eyesâ€"all green, soft and amused. He held a matching cup with his name scribbled in black sharpie on the side. He gave her a lopsided grin and slide into the desk next to hers.

"No need to thank me," he told her, taking a sip from his. "I figured you may need it."

Yeah, he got that right. She smiled widely and straightened, instantly pressing the cup to her lips and tasting the deep strong taste of coffee. Okita stared at her, his eyes widened just a fraction and his lips tugged up into that amused smirk again.

Chizuru sighed longingly and gave him a grateful smile, "Yeah, I

did..." she finally mumbled, licking her lips. His eyes darkened slightly and they instantly zoned on her lips. Chizuru turned her attention away, shyly fiddling with the coffee.

She watched as Okita slowly leaned towards her, "You know, I lied when I said you didn't need to thank me, Chizuru. It's only polite..."

Chizuru quickly felt her cheeks redden and she turned towards him, "I'm sorry, uh..." "thank you!" she lifted her coffee, "It's just..." "I..." She shook her head and smiled again. "I'm obviously still half asleep." She laughed and took another satisfyingly deep drink. \_Coffee. Glorious, glorious coffee.\_

Okita tipped his head and smiled knowingly at her, "Late night, huh?"

"Social media's evil..." she mumbled back, suppressing the urge to laugh and just keep smiling like an idiot. He would know that considering he was the reason she didn't go to bed until 3:30 in the morning. By then her eyelids couldn't stay open for much longer and she messaged him telling him that she was throwing in the towel and finally going to bed.

He only responded by telling her that she should've gone to bed hours ago..."like he suggested because he was smart. Looking at him now, he didn't seem nearly as frazzled as Chizuru felt and was sure, looked. Sen hadn't noticed..."but she didn't look at her long enough, not like Chizuru had in the mirror.

Her hair seemed to lack that bounce, even after the shower, her eyes seemed dull from the lack of rest and she was sure that there were bags under her eyes. Her mind kept trying to reason with her, telling her that it was all in her head and that bags couldn't form that fast but she wasn't so sure.

Chizuru would be lying if she said her morning was going smooth. She woke up later than usual, as she kept hitting snooze on her both her cellphone and bedside clock and then rushed to her morning class. She was beyond glad to know she had five minutes before class to nap..."which she embarrassingly did right before Okita placed the coffee in her hand.

Okita smirked, "I believe it." He pointed at her coffee, "Sorry it's black, wasn't sure how you like your coffee or if you liked anything else...stuck to the obvious."

She glanced down at her cup and shrugged, "This is fine. This'll actually work out for the best, so it's perfect. I need this to be strong, usually I like to drown it in creamer with one sugar. Otherwise, Latte's are my default."

"Good to know." He shifted in his seat right as the Professor stepped from the office. He immediately called the classroom to attention and then began attendance.

Chizuru glanced at Okita and furrowed her brow, "Oh no, you can't!" she whispered, her eyes glancing between the Professor and Okita. "I get next round..." "it's only fair!"

Okita rolled his eyes, "Pfft, it's my damn fault you're this tired..." he glanced at her, eyebrow raised. "I should've waited to message you and shit during more reasonable hours." He scratched the back of his head, his eyes looking everywhere but her.

Chizuru shook her head, "No, I could'veâ€" she cut herself off, realizing that they were at a standstill. He wasn't going to cave first due to his stubborn pride and she was being too polite. She smiled softly to herself, turning her attention to the Professor as he went on lecturing about their recent assignment. "You're right. It is your fault." She finally whispered, trying hard not to keep from smiling.

Out of the corner of her eye, she noticed Okita's head whip towards her and that time she couldn't keep the smile from her face. She hunkered down slightly and pressed her hand to try in vain to hide it. Okita shook his head, the smile growing wider on his face.

"You're awfully cheeky," he mumbled, poking his pen at her arm.

After that, class sailed by smoothly. If she had known that concentrating in class would've been easier if she had accepted his offer of friendship right away, she wouldn't have turned him down so quickly. Okita behavedâ€"surprisinglyâ€"only making the occasional quick jib or side comment that usually made her giggle or smile.

Otherwise, he let her take notes without any pestering, he didn't pull on her hair to get her attention and he didn't drag the Professor's attention on them. He didn't take notes of his own and he would more than once stare at her while she did, which she had to admit was unnerving for a bit but then she got use to it. He didn't stare for long, she just chalked it up to him being intense.

As she was gathering her materials, Okita handed her a slip. She tipped her head to the side and looked up at him curiously, he only smirked.

"See ya later." Was his only response before he left her. She watched him, waiting for him to be completely gone from the classroom before opening the slip. A seven digit number was printed and below that he drew a smiley face. Chizuru smiled and pulled her phone out, instantly programming his number into her phone.

When she looked up, her eyes automatically went to a group of girls down a row from herâ€"Sorority or some sort by the matching Delta-whatever tops they wore. One of the girls was staring hard at her, her mouth moving as she talked to the girls before slowly each one turned towards her. She frowned and quickly finished gathering her things before hastily heading out.

Chizuru didn't want to think about the girls, but she couldn't help it as she walked to her next class. What had she done to deserve \_that?\_ She was dwelling over that thought when she passed right by Kazama, not even noticing him as she shuffled onward. She didn't even hear him clear his throat to try to get her attention.

"Alright, I understand."

Chizuru stopped and glanced over her shoulder, finally taking notice of Kazama who was looking down at her. His hands were in his pocket and his expression was pinchedâ€”not like his normal way either, but more perplexed.

"Oh, Kazama whatâ€”"

Kazama raised his hand and cut her off, so she only nodded and waited. He frowned slightly and she felt her worries start to rise. Did he know she lied to him? His hand slowly reached out and took hers, "I understand that I was less than...cordial last night." He sighed, "I should've handled it better than I did, although it was a pretty late hourâ€”you have to agree."

It took a moment for Chizuru to realize what he was talking about and that he was trying to be remorseful about it. She tried hard not to frown or laugh at the situation. Frown because she knew that he wasn't going to apologizeâ€”Kazama never apologized, he just felt bad about something and laugh because she was over it and yet he thought otherwise.

"Listen, it's fine, Kazama. Iâ€”"

He shook his head, lowering his head slightly and raising her hand higher. "No, " he sighed again, eyes crinkling with concentration. "It's not fine, Chizuru. I'll make it up to you, okay? We'll have dinner tonight and then you can talk to me about your day. How does that sound?"

"Do you think you'll have time for that?" she asked, shifting from one foot to another. She wanted to believe that their plans wouldn't be cancelled for something that would come up. He was normally good about keeping things good, but she wasn't sure considering how busy he was getting. Kazama never had to worry about making time for her before, she was always usually a phone call away and he could squeeze that hour or so phone call. But now, it was different.

Kazama pressed his lips to her hair and pulled back, "I'll worry about that." He dropped her hand and turned away, "I'll call you and let you know where we'll go."

Chizuru nodded and watched him leave, her head tipping to the side. What was going on with everyone around her? She didn't have time to worry about it considering she was running late for her next class. She tucked the thought away for later and quickly hurried to her other class.

\* \* \*

><p>"Where are you going so early in the morning?"<p>

Okita glanced up and resisted the urge to roll his eyes. Hijikata crossed his arms and leaned against the door frame. He watched him with dark violet eyes and a shrewd expression, one he usually only used on potential students that had to interview with him. The expression did nothing to Okita, instead it only made him want to say something to irk him.

But now was not the time. Hijikata rarely visited the Fraternity

house and he was curious as to what brought him by. The last time was right after his fight, when he got home just like Heisuke had mentioned, he was there waiting to go over his match.

Needless to say, it was a long night of Hijikata going over what he needed to improve on and barely mentioning what he did right. Not that he was surprised, Hijikata saves his praises for when it's truly deserved. As much as Okita was confident and knew how good he was, he had yet to be truly praised by him. He tried not to let that bother him.

"What's it to you?" he shot back, fighting back a yawn. He was never a morning person, everyone knew that. Hijikata didn't even think twice of his anger, he knew him longer than anyone else, and instead furrowed his brow even more so.

"Nothing, just odd behavior is all."

Okita quirked an eyebrow and resisted the urge to pour himself a cup of orange juice. If he drank that, he wouldn't be in the mood for coffee and that would defeat the whole purpose of waking up early. The past week would've been a waste and he was just getting use to it.

"Nothing odd about it." He scratched the back of his head, "Just have shit to do. What the fuck do you care anyway?" he asked.

"The guys just have been mentioning it, is all." He straightened, "And you can't afford any distractions. Your head needs to be in your studies and the matches. You start up again next week."

This time Okita did roll his eyes. "Talk to Sano or Saito about it, then. You know they handle that shit. I just go wherever the fuck you tell me to." He grabbed his phone and scrolled through his cellphone, typing out a text to Chizuru. Not only was waking up early to get coffee part of his routine, but so was texting his newest best friend. The week had really flown by.

Hijikata's hand clamped down over his wrist that held his phone and Okita glared hard at him. "And I'm not being distracted," he bite out, pulling his hand back.

Hijikata gave him a look that told him he didn't believe him, not one bit. "I heard about the party," He told him, his eyes narrowing even further.

Okita shook his head, smirking. "Is that what this stupid visit is about?" he asked, "I didn't plan that shit. It's a colb. The Annual Mixer to start off the year and my victoryâ€"whatever." Honestly, he forgot all about it until Hijikata mentioned it.

His stare hardened, "I'm also talking about...certain distractions." He shook his head, "We don't need to have unnecessary attention on you or this Fraternity. That Kazama is already up your ass and mine in the Administration about you...we don't need another reason for it."

"Please," he mumbled, chuckling lightly. "Is this really about her? It's nothing to worry about, ass. We're just friendsâ€""



"Bullshit." Hijikata's face pinched, "You don't do friendships with girls and if the guys are feeling ansty about it thenâ€"

Okita raised his hands, "Whoa, whoa!" he glared hard at his friend, whom at the moment was becoming less and less. "Why the fuck would you drag them into it? They \_know\_ if they have a problem, they should have the balls to come to me about it!"

"You wouldn't listen to them even if they could."

Okita had to admit, that was true. He would've just blown them off, after all, this was his business and he hated anyone else meddling in it. But Heisuke knew better about the situation, but he had been antsy as well. They barely knew her, fuck, he was just getting to know her.

As if reading his mind, Hijikata sighed. "We know shit about her other than her name, back ground andâ€in my caseâ€transcripts." He raised a hand to him, "Just be smart about it, alright? We don't need any more attention. This is my \_only\_ warning."

Okita stayed surprisingly silent. Mostly because his thoughts were racing and muddling together, but he didn't offer any witty response. Hijikata glanced at him once more and shook his head. "Don't fuck up this party either. You know the rules."

Quickly, Okita snapped out his thoughts and he nodded simply. "Yeah." He mumbled, smirking and waving him off as if he were swatting at a bug. Which, in his mind, he sort of was. "Whatever." He didn't wait for Hijikata's response or to see if he left or not, just turned away, his mind buzzing again.

So the guys were feeling weird about his new friendship with Chizuru? He smirked to himself. Then it was about time she got to know them as well.

\_Perfect.\_

\* \* \*

><p>The line in the coffee shop wasn't too long and when he walked in, he didn't see the familiar brown hair of Chizuru. He couldn't help but smile as he took his spot in line. He wasn't sure he was going to get there on time with Hijikata causing him to run later than normal, but he did. Another morning, another win.<p>

Just as he pulled out his cellphone to text Chizuru of the accomplishment, the door behind him chimed and she came rushing inâ€practically tripping over the door frame. Her face immediately flushed as she righted herself, eyes darted around to see if anyone saw her. Okita counted his lucky stars that he was one of the few privileged who had.

Her large brown eyes finally landed on him and he couldn't contain the chuckle as her cheeks darkened with her blush. Automatically, she ducked her head as she shuffled to her place in line right behind him. Okita couldn't help but smile down at her, there was never a dull moment. He leaned down and nudged her.

"So how many does that make?" he teased, tipping his head

back.

Chizuru lifted her head, brown eyes narrowing. "You're just a sore loser," she mumbled, a smile slipping.

"You're avoiding the question, Chizuru..."

She rolled her eyes, "Are you ever going to let me buy the coffee...?" she asked, dodging the question again.

Okita shifted his body just as the line moved forward. "Maybe," he glanced at her over his shoulder and smirked, "If you ever get here before me, that is."

Her eyes glimmered with humor and something else he couldn't place. Chizuru crossed her arms and shook her head, "I guess I'll head to class then," She grimaced lightly, pushing up onto her tip toes before glancing back at Okita. "...you sure there isn't anything I can do to get you to let me buy this round?" she asked, her eyebrows furrowingâ€"rather adorablyâ€"as she always did when she was troubled, which happened a bit around him. "I mean, you've been getting me a latte every morning for the last couple of days...I feel bad."

Okita grinned, turning his body towards her. "Anything?" he asked, his mind reeling with a thousand thoughtsâ€"all of which he could never actually vocalize or tell her.

Her eyes widened and her mouth dropped open, closed, and then dropped again. Okita couldn't help it, but he laughed loudly at her expression. He shook his head and sighed, not caring in the slightest at the attention he drew to them just then. He poked her forehead with his index finger, "You make it way to easy,"

Chizuru pressed her lips together, eyebrows instantly furrowing as her expression pinched. It was meant to look mad, but it came across like she swallowed a bunch of sour grapes. It was hard for Okita not to laugh again. "Alright, alright. I'm sorry," he lifted his hands in the air in mock surrender and smirked. "How about this, I'll let you buy today's coffee, tomorrow's and \_even\_ the day after thatâ€"without fighting you on itâ€"if you have dinner with me tonight."

He watched her as her mad expression melted into confusion and then surprise. Her mouth did that fish gasping for air thing again, except not as ridiculous and she shifted her footing about a dozen times. Okita let her squirm for a little more before he poked her on the forehead again.

"As friends, \_of course\_." He smirked and she blushed, "I don't flirt with girls who have boyfriends, you know. But that's my condition. Dinner..."

Chizuru pursed her lips again, "And you really won't fight me over the coffee thing?" she asked, quirked an eyebrow skeptically. He didn't blame her for asking.

"Promise." He laid a hand over his heart, "Cross my heart and all that shit."

She laughed and shook her head, "Alright. Sounds good." Chizuru fidgeted for another quick second and she ducked her head. "You'll let me know where we're going, right?" she asked.

Okita nudged her and she lifted her head in time to catch him wink. "Where's the fun in that?" He maneuvered around her and grinned. "You remember how I like my coffee, right?"

Chizuru gave him another pinched expression and he turned away from her, chuckling under his breath. When he stepped out and was out of view of the coffee shop, he pulled out his phone. He pressed the phone to his ear as he made a detour before heading to class. His eyes locking on the donut and coffee place.

She never said anything about donuts.

"Hello?" Heisuke's voice sounded groggy on the other end.

"Hey douche, we got dinner plans tonight. Pass it on."

\* \* \*

><p>Chizuru shouldn't have been surprised that Kazama had cancelled their dinner plans the day he wanted to make it up to her. She also shouldn't have been surprised when everyday since, he'd talked up a wonderful plan only to postpone due to his commitment of being Student Council presidentâ€"which she understood. Somewhat.<p>

Things weren't as she thought they would be when she finally got to the same College as him. In a way, she imagined that their relationship would be similar to the way it was in High Schoolâ€"quaint nights and comfortable quality time. Chizuru use to be able to just talk and talk to Kazama about her day and now...she barely got two sentences out before he was rushing her, albeit politely, off the phone.

That day was no exception. Kazama smiled down at her, his eyes crinkling softly as heâ€"once againâ€"promised that they'd have dinner together. He tucked a stray hand over her ear, "Tonight. I'll text you." He mumbled, placing a quick kiss to her forehead.

Chizuru tried hard to keep her smile in place, to appear as if she was happy when in reality, she wasn't keeping her hopes up. The last couple of days she'd hardly seen him except for the few short seconds between classes when he had "time" to walk her to and from. Even then, conversation was quick and short.

"Yeah, okay." She gave him her best smile, but all it did was hurt her cheeks. He couldn't seem to tell that she was faking it and she was grateful that he didn't. Kazama pulled away and Chizuru's eyes skipped over to Okita, who was walking towards them. Her heart seemed to panic and she tried hard not to show it, but she wanted nothing more than for Kazama to walk away.

Okita's expression seemed to harden as his eyes darted to Kazama and then herâ€"she could tell by the shade his green eyes took that he wasn't pleased. She didn't blame him. The last time Kazama was around, he'd been very mean to Okita and surely seeing him reminded him of when she very rudely denied his friendship.

Chizuru bite the corner of her lip, she didn't want a repeat of that week again. Not having Okita to talk to and having him upset with you was not a good thing. Kazama gave a final nod, his hand reaching up to cup the side of her face.

"Don't worry," he told her, his eyes zeroing in on her lip. "I've moved things around, tonight for \_sure\_." He gave her what she was sure he thought was a comforting smile before walking away. Luckily, he went in the other direction that Okita was coming from, so he didn't even see him. She didn't want Kazama to unintentionally starting somethingâ€”and she didn't want him to start lecturing her again about him.

That would lead to a spiraling turn of events, she was sure. Chizuru still wasn't ready to tell Kazama of her friendship with Okita. He didn't need to know yet. \_Next time.\_ She thought to herself, \_Next time Okita's name is brought up. I'll tell him.\_ She lost count how many times she'd told herself that.

She didn't notice Okita was standing in front of her until he waved around a baggie in front of her face. Chizuru blinked rapidly and smiled up at him. The hardened look was completely gone now, but she didn't miss the brief sweep his eyes did in the direction Kazama headed to. She knew he wasn't going to say anything about his little visit and she wasn't going to either. It was almost like an unspoken vow between them.

"What's that?" she asked directing her attention to the bag, the font very faint on the side.

Okita turned his eyes back to her, stilled the bag and smirked, "Treats." He answered simply, like she could easily see through the bag.

Chizuru fought the frown but failed, her shoulders slumping rather dramatically. She didn't want to whine, but..."You said that you'd let me buyâ€”"

He held up a hand, his eyes glittering with humor and not at all annoyed with her slight whine. "Yeah, I know. But I said that shit about coffee, we never negotiated treats."

Chizuru shook her head, "That's cheating..." She accused, but took the baggie from him nonetheless. A donut with their morning coffee actually sounded really great considering she didn't really eat anything else for breakfast. He was spoiling her mornings now, she wasn't sure what she would do when the semester was over. The thought saddened her.

"Cheating." He sighed from behind her as they walked into class. "That's a harsh word...I'd like to say \_strategically\_ thinking."

Chizuru handed Okita his coffee that sat on her desk in it's drink holder, "Strategically thinking, huh?" she smiled softly and sat down. "Never heard \_that\_ \_one\_ before. It's good."

Okita shrugged, digging his hand in the baggie and withdrawing a chocolate covered one. "Yeah, I'm chalk full of good thinking," he

winked at her as he took a bite. "Just so you know."

Day after day, Chizuru found herself more bold. She rolled her eyes, "So am I." She mumbled softly and he quirked an eyebrow, but she only smiled in response.

As usual, class flew by faster than she expected it to and she tried hard not to feel disappointed. Mornings were beginning to be her favorite part of the day—and Okita aside, she really enjoyed her class. Everything was just clicking.

Okita took her trash before she could even notice or object to it. She pushed out of her chair quickly, in vain to try and stop him but he waved her off, giving her a look that had her slowly sinking back into her chair. She looked up at him stubbornly and crossed her arms. He only laughed.

While he walked down, Chizuru quickly hopped up and collected all her stuff and his very few items he carried to class. Once he was back up, she handed his stuff to him and smiled. He tipped his head to the side, a sly look sparkled in his mischievous green eyes.

"Thanks."

Chizuru shrugged nonchalantly, "Sure. You know you can't do everything," She gave him an innocent smile that he instantly saw through. It was a little victory, but a victory nonetheless.

"Touche." He leaned forward, "But you haven't seen me begin to try. If you did, you would know that I can, indeed, do everything." Okita gave her a smug look and she rolled her eyes playfully. "Speaking of which, remember! Dinner tonight! 7 o'clock sharp!" Okita skipped the last two steps and landed easily next to Chizuru.

A witty response was on the tip of her tongue when she remembered Kazama's plans. She shut her mouth and pressed her lips together. Okita reached towards her and ruffled her hair playfully, sending a mixture of warm fuzzies swarming her belly and a sense of dread through her. Not even her own father ruffled her hair like that. What did it mean to him?

"Later! And don't bail out on me, ok? We made a deal and I've got a surprise!" He winked once again and just like that, he was off. Her mornings were becoming more and more shorter than she liked.

And what was she to do if Kazama could make dinner tonight? For once, she hoped that he had to cancel again.

\* \* \*

><p>He did not cancel.<p>

In fact, he set up the dinner a good solid hour and a half from her dinner date with Okita. Chizuru squeezed her eyes shut so hard that it started to hurt her head.

Not a date, not a date, not a date! She reprimanded herself. Just dinner. Dinner between friends.

She'd had plenty of dinners with Sen, being with Okita was no different whatsoever. Chizuru wanted to cancel on him this time, but she didn't have a good enough excuse considering Kazama knew she was not yet involved with any extracurricular activities. And a part of her did want to go to dinner...but who had dinner at 9:30 on a school night?

Chizuru didn't like feeling like she was a last minute squeeze into his obviously super busy schedule. That thought led to her thinking of her free time. Sure she studied and did her homework...but other than that, she had neglected to find a club of her interest or some extra curricular activities to do. She pursed her lips, her father wouldn't be pleased with that.

Since she'd been to school for nearly a month now, her father had called a total of 25 times. Of course, the phone conversations lasted only 15-20 minutesâ€”on a good dayâ€”and usually consisted of him telling her that she could 'change her mind anytime she wanted.' But mostly, they exchanged emails since his job was pretty demanding of his time.

Her twin brother emailed her twice as much as her father did, but called her less. His own studies was by far more demanding than hers ever were and she was surprised that he even had time to write to her. She was use to that from them. Growing up, they were always so busy with their own things. She was fairly independent by the age of 15.

It shouldn't have been too surprising, or strange, for Chizuru that Kazama was in the same predicament. But she did. She pursed her lips, wanting to be able to talk to Sen about her situation and feelingsâ€”but that also meant saying things out loud that she wasn't ready to deal with. Maybe she wasn't trying hard to be understanding? Maybe she was too indulging to her fantasy thoughts? Maybe she wasn't giving Kazama a fair chance?

After all, it was only a month into the school year. He couldn't possibly always be this busy year round, right? She smiled at her reflection, took a deep calming breath and slowly released it.

\_Yes. Patience. Patience is key.\_ Chizuru smiled again and quickly got up to get ready. Okita had texted her the place for dinner (thankfully not the same location as with Kazama) and she only had an hour to get ready. She had made sure to get all her stuff done early so she didn't have to rush through both dinner dates.

As she went through her drawers and closet, she tried to find something that was simple but niceâ€”something to wear for dinner with friends but could easily be date material for when she met her boyfriend. It was a daunting task and she once again wished Sen was around to help herâ€”but she had her own date that she went off to earlier. Sen never had problems when it came to things like that.

In the end, she stuck with a nice pair of light wash jeans and a soft pink baby tee with matching flats. She swept her hair to the side, compared to her usual ponytail she did most mornings, and applied a little bit of eyeliner and lip gloss. She was sure she would have to reapply later before her other dinner date with Kazama.

As soon as she was done, she grabbed her dorm key and purse and headed out. Her mind reeling, heart racing, and palms sweating. Pulling off tonight would be a feat of it's own and a part of her was dreading the night all together.

She just hoped it would all work out.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>an: Just a little further. Read and Review, \_please!\_ As always, thank you for waiting and thank you for reading! Until next time! :) \*\*

## 7. Blind

\_AU. OkitaXChizuru Romance.\_

\*\*A/n: Another installment. :) Enjoy. \*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Crazy<strong>

\*\*Chapter 7: Blind\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>The walk to the restaurant didn't take long and she was glad to see that it wasn't a necessarily hopping place, but it was fairly calm. Most sit-ins around campus were reserved to couples and big groups, which was what Chizuru liked about them. Most Frat guys or Sorority girls would be at the bar atmosphere places that were usually loud and smokey.<p>

Okita was already there when she walked in and she smiled at him when she spotted him. He waved her over and her eyes widened when she noticed the large table he was seated at. "H-hey..." she mumbled, her eyes counting each empty seat with available silverware. 6 empty seats, her and Okita's included. "What's with the table...?" she asked.

Okita gave her that sly smirk and she felt stomach knot up. What was he planning? "It's the surprise I mentioned." He motioned to her seat which was right next to him, "Don't worry, it'll be fun!"

She wanted to ask what was going on, but she was interrupted when she heard the very familiar voice of Heisuke. His voice, as usual, carried fairly well in the restaurant, earning him dozens of stares from the few others inside dining.

"Oi, Souji!" Heisuke waved off the waitress attendant and came towards the table, his eyes bounced from him to Chizuru. "Hey, Chizuru!"

"Hey," Chizuru smiled politely at him and she glanced at Okita questionably.

Okita only smirked, his attention quickly jumping back to Heisuke. "Where are the others?" he asked him.

Heisuke shrugged and took the seat opposite them, "Hell if I know." He pursed his lips, "They were right behind me, so I figure they'll be here soon."

It wasn't even a second later before three more guys walked in, spotted them and then headed over. Chizuru instantly recognized two of them from the other night, the Security guys, Golden eyes and Blue eyes—Sanosuke and Shinpachi, if she remembered correctly. The other one she had seen maybe once or twice before, but other than that didn't know him. He had wispy jet black hair that suited his face perfectly and his eyes were a deep hue of borderline purple-blueish eyes. They were unusual, to say the least, but he fit the group when it came to odd, but beautiful looks.

His face, compared to the rest, was stoic and stern looking. In a lot of ways, he reminded her of Kazama. Her eyes darted to phone that she had set on the table next to her. She quickly pocketed it to make room for whoever sat next to her and her thoughts briefly jumped to Kazama. She only had an hour and thirty minutes before her next dinner.

All the guys seemed to stop when they spotted her and she blushed, trying hard not to appear as shocked as they seemed. Each of their eyes seemed to bounce between her and Okita—silent speaking to him in way she didn't even know existed until then. Okita shifted only slightly in his seat, but not in a nervous way but rather in a way that commanded attention.

Shinpachi crossed his arms, eyes narrowing. "Thought you said this was a \_special\_ dinner," he asked, shooting an accusatory look at Heisuke.

Heisuke raised his hands, "Hey, don't look at me!" He pointed his thumb towards Okita, "He told me to tell you that. I don't know what he's thinking."

Sanosuke snorted, "That's not any different from any other day."

Okita rolled his eyes, "Man, you guys complain a shit ton, don't you?" he draped his arm on the back of Chizuru's chair, his fingers dangerously close to her arm. If he were to stretch them out, he'd be able to easily touch her. The thought set off butterflies in her stomach and gave her goose-bumps. The arm on the chair didn't go unnoticed by the guys. "It\_ is\_ a special dinner."

Okita turned his glance to Chizuru and smirked, "I figured it was high time you met the guys at the Fraternity—my brothers." He gave each of them a look that Chizuru wasn't sure what it meant. "\_Guys\_, this is Chizuru."

For a few seconds it was silent, glances being the only thing exchanged between them all. Chizuru still felt her cheeks blush, her mind still wondering why Okita had decided to do this. Finally she spoke up, realizing that she wanted to be liked by them.

"Hello." She tried to push past her sudden shyness as she gave them each her best smile.



The guys finally seemed to react, each taking a seat at the table as they returned her greeting. Okita's fingers drummed on the back of Chizuru's chair. "The lump on the end is Shinpachi, head of security detail, his handsome friend next to him is Sanosuke who handles all my set-ups and side bets, you've already met Heisukeâ€”our pledge, and then the ever talkative Saito who actually trains with me."

Shinpachi's face hardened slightly, his eyes glanced at Chizuru uneasily. "Ix-nay the Usiness-bay." It only took a moment for Chizuru to decode his pig Latin. \_Nix the business\_.

Okita rolled his eyes again and sighed loudly, annoyed like. "I don't know why you guys suddenly think I'm fucking stupid or something, but seriously?" he shook his head, "If I didn't trust her, I wouldn't be saying this shit in front of her."

Heisuke nodded emphatically, "Dudes, she's cool." He quirked an eyebrow, "And since when do you know pig Latin, Shinpachi?"

Shinpachi grunted and only shrugged. Chizuru felt slightly uncomfortable then. Her mind jumping to multiple conclusions. It was obvious that not many people knew what went on inside the Fraternity and very few were ever 'in' with the whole lot of them if they weren't a member or could be trusted. She should've felt privileged to be trusted, for Okita to want the others to trust her as well, but it made her feel pressured.

He had mentioned before that they would flip out over their new found friendshipâ€”not as bad as Kazama would, but still. She supposed their reaction was better than what it could've been. But maybe that's also why Okita had them eat at a public place. Chizuru really wanted them to like her and she mentally tried to shake off her discomfort. She just had to be herself. They were just guys, nothing too unnerving.

The atmosphere was still a little tense, but Heisuke was quick to diffuse it and the others seemed to feed off it. Or rather, feed off each other. It was the most entertaining thing she had ever witnessed before. She had been curious about the lot of them once they were together and now she knew. No one she'd ever known before were as close knit as they all seemed to be with each other. Heisuke and Shinpachi would often banter back and forth, throwing insults at each other like they hated each other.

Okita called it 'tough love' but Chizuru thought it more as sibling rivalry. Not that she ever had experience with it, her twin was very blaze and strictâ€”he never competed with her about anything. Kaoru argued his side and Chizuru, well, she just usually gave in.

Okita and Sanosuke would each tease the two, and then each other before they started talking about things that happened last year. To which Heisuke, and admittedly her, felt a little left out in their reminiscing. Sanosuke shook his head, smiling a rather dazzling smile she was sure had most of the girls swooning.

"Then this guy chooses to blame \_me\_ for the lack of interest!" He nudges a pouty faced Shinpachi.

"I had it in the bag until she laid eyes on \_you\_!" he retorted before taking a long chug of his soda—the waitress had fumbled around for a bit before she could properly take all their drink orders. Chizuru didn't blame her, she was still in awe to be in company of such good looking guys.

"You were coming on too strong, Shinpachi! I already told you that," Sanosuke ran a hand through his dark red hair.

"Fuck that!" Shinpachi clenched his jaw, fire burning in his eyes that made Chizuru wonder if he was going to punch Sanosuke for something that happened last year.

Okita nodded, "No, I remember that night too." He chuckled softly, warming Chizuru. She liked his laugh. "You were shit faced and practically had the poor girl cornered...it was \_obvious\_ she was grateful to Sanosuke for stepping in when he did."

Shinpachi waved them both off as the rest of them laughed, "Bah! It was all apart of my plan!" he defended, lips pressing into a thin line. "It would'a worked too..."

Finally the attention and conversation seemed to cycle around to Chizuru. Sanosuke gave her one of his dazzling smiles that had her blush a little. She realized that he didn't do it on purpose, but rather it was his normal smile. He was the kind of guy who didn't really realize how good looking he was or how his smile seemed to affect girls around him.

Unfortunately, she was no exception to the smile. Other than Kazama, they didn't have guys like them back home. "So how goes it as the Student Council's girl, uh?" he asked curiously.

Chizuru felt her mouth dry up and not as an effect from his smile, but rather to the mention of Kazama. She had completely forgotten about him as she sat around listening to them. She glanced at Okita, his green eyes sparkled wickedly as they eyed her closely. He never asked about Kazama or her relationship with him. She wasn't sure if she was grateful or bothered by it...

Subconsciously, Chizuru picked at the hem of her shirt, ducking her head slightly and eyeing the menu intensely. The waitress hadn't come back yet to take their food order. She wasn't sure why when Sanosuke said it, it made her want to \_deny\_ it. Or why it sounded like he sort of pitied her, or like an accusation more than an actual fact. It never sounded like that when her brother or father would say it. It made her blush and want to avoid talking about Kazama, it seemed wrong to talk about him when she was around Okita—around them. She heard Okita chuckle quickly and she nodded quickly, stiffly and almost unnoticeable.

His fingers popped into her vision before they snatched the menu away from her. Instantly she followed his long fingers, to his hand and then up to his smiling face. The smile wasn't forced, but it wasn't necessarily sincere. It was just a mask, not at all like when they were alone. She fidgeted slightly but kept her gaze on his. They heated a little, but stayed the soft green she was growing accustomed to. She had to admit to herself, she liked when they softened to the soft green color. It reminded her of fresh grass, the kind you laid on during a nice summer day. It made her want to get lost in them.

Did he know what he enticed when he looked at her like that?

Her heart was racing again, despite herself.\_ Calm down.\_ She thought angrily. \_There's nothing to worry about, you're not doing anything wrong!\_

But why did it feel...\_right\_? Why did it feel right to have dinner with him? To hang out with his friends and just laugh and joke? That nagged at her. She hadn't even officially met any of Kazama's college friends yet. He hadn't even bothered to try and make that a possibility. And sure, she always felt comfortable around Kazama—\_safe\_. With him, she didn't have to worry about possibly making him angry because she knew what to do to avoid it. But with Okita? Everything was a gamble. Anything could set him off and even though he wasn't dangerous \_to\_ her, he was dangerous \_for\_ her. At least he was when the thought of Okita created those kinds of doubting thoughts...

Back to the question at hand, Sanosuke had spoken to her. The curious quirk of Okita's eyebrow reminded her of that and snapped her from her \_very\_ derailed thoughts. Why did he have that power to distract her? Okita's head bobbed a little, gesturing to Sanosuke.

Quickly she directed her eyes to Sanosuke who also had an amused look on his face. Was it amusement? She wasn't really sure, since she wasn't use to trying to decipher the look in his eyes. She tipped her head, spouting off the first thing that came to mind. "Boring." She finally mumbled, shocking herself with her blunt honesty. It was an unintentional answer, but it made them laugh and she couldn't help the smile.

"Uh—um, sorry." She shook her head, laughing softly. "It's just, it's different than what I thought it would be. But it's not \_bad\_, I suppose..." She shrugged, taking the opportunity to take her menu back from Okita. She hoped that would be the last of him.

"At least you're honest about it," Sanosuke smiled.

Chizuru nodded, "I am." She glanced at Okita, "Just like the night of fight," She was lying now and Okita gave her a knowing look since he was the only one who knew otherwise.

Sanosuke's eyes sparkled, "I remember." He exchanged a look with Okita, "I like her." He told him unabashedly, as if she weren't even there to hear that. She blushed and smiled timidly. It was the first time she ever felt...good about being herself. She had just made a friend.

Shinpachi pursed his lips and leaned forward, "Okay...but I'm still not convinced." He mumbled and Heisuke nudged him, glaring. Shinpachi shrugged causally, "I mean, no offense or anything. I'm sure you're \_nice\_ but...how do we \_know\_ we can trust you? Especially when your dating \_that\_ guy?"

Okita glared, "If she has my label of approval and trust, isn't that enough for you?" he asked through clenched teeth. Chizuru noticed his hands ball up into tight fists, she tried hard not to appear ruffled when in reality, she was.

Chizuru shrugged, trying hard not to stare at Okita's hands.

"Honestly, you don't." She answered truthfully. Shinpachi furrowed his brows and she continued, "But it's not my business to tell Kazama something he doesn't need to know. It's his job to be after you guys, not mine. And," Chizuru glanced at Okita, "Okita already told me he'd kill me if I so happened to say anything, anyway."

Instantly all eyes were on Okita and he couldn't help but laugh then. His hands unfolding from their death grip, she smiled mostly to herself for distracting him. Heisuke squirmed nervously in his seat, his eyes bouncing between the two.

"Okita you ass, you didn't..."

Okita shook his head, "It's a joke. It was a joke!" he insisted, but couldn't stop the laugh. Chizuru couldn't help but duck her head, smiling like an idiot and pretending to really mull over her choices of dinner even though she already knew what she was going to get.

If she laughed right then, it would ruin what could possibly be a great moment. She noticed through her bangs that Sanosuke shifted in his seat and Heisuke coughed loudly and awkwardly—she wasn't sure who it was suppose to fool, but no one at the table was falling for it.

"If he gets wind of this—"

Sanosuke cut off Shinpachi, "He'd have a fucking aneurysm." He leaned back in his chair.

Okita sighed loudly, but not as effectively as he did earlier. "Seriously, guys. It was a joke." He glanced at Chizuru who was still trying hard to keep a straight face. She hoped that he didn't notice how hard she was trying not to laugh, she knew that seeing this side of them was slightly rare and it was a little exciting for her knowing that she was privileged to see it. "Do you really think she'd be here if she thought it was anything but?"

They each seemed to exchange another set of looks, each one skeptical. Saito, leaned forward, his eyebrows set firmly over his eyes. "It's a tasteless joke." He stated, to which everyone but them promptly agreed to.

Okita slumped in his chair and crossed his arms, much like a toddler who was on the brink of throwing a world class tantrum. That coupled with a look of annoyance and slight betrayal shone in his eyes finally pushed Chizuru past her own limits. She slapped a hand over her mouth but that came around too late, as a loud laugh escaped.

She ducked her head, but couldn't stop the tumbling of laughter that rocked her whole body as she laughed into her palm. When she felt her laughs start to finally subside, Chizuru lifted her head and gave them all a bright smile. Okita grinned, his hand reclaiming its place on the back of his chair. He gave her a look that seemed full of pride—which she wasn't sure why he gave her that look, but it pleased her. She felt like she did something right.

Sanosuke tipped his head back and let out a long sigh, his lips quirking upwards. "Birds of a feather..." he mumbled.

Shinpachi snorted, "Flock together...yeah, sounds about right." His eyes bounced between the two one last time before he finally opened his menu.

Heisuke gave them a wide grin, "Looks like you're in, Chizuru." He leaned forward, "Which is a lot better than my position."

Shinpachi snapped his attention to him and grinned, "Yeah, if Heisuke did what you just pulled, he'd be groveling about now." Heisuke only glared in response.

Chizuru shifted in her chair, feeling a bundle of energy course through her body. She was happy. So, so ridiculously happy and cheerful in that moment that she wasn't sure what to do with herself. She wanted to jump around like an idiot, or say the first thing on her mind—which at the moment, would be all too embarrassing, considering Okita was on it.

But it was hard for her not to think about him when his arm and hand were so close to her, that she could feel the heat coming off of it. She was very aware that if she were to lean fully back against her chair, his arm would then indefinitely be pressed against her. Not to mention the look he had given her, it was still seared into her brain.

Thankfully, the waitress came by then and took the attention from her. She ordered something light—much to the chagrin of the guys, except Saito, all of which were quick to order a few sides for her 'just in case' her salad wasn't enough. Chizuru wasn't in any rush to tell them she had another dinner, where she would obviously eat more, later.

Conversation around the table drifted into a much calmer topic and Chizuru decided to take the opportunity to excuse herself to the bathroom. She had felt her pocket vibrate a while ago while the waitress was taking orders and she didn't feel it polite to answer it at the table—although she was very tempted to see who it was. She knew that if it was her father or brother, she would have a lot of explaining to do.

She felt Okita's eyes on her the entire way to the bathroom, chancing a quick glance over her shoulder when she reached the bathroom door. He gave her a slight smirk before his eyes drifted away, rather politely, she noticed. Without realizing it, she found herself smiling as she pushed through. Luckily, the bathroom was empty and she proceeded to pull out her cellphone.

Two text messages were left on her phone—one from Sen and the other from Kazama. She opened the one from Sen first since she didn't want to deal with Kazama just yet.

\_Chizuru, my love! \_

\_You better have a darn good excuse why you're not in our dorm tonight, lady! I know I do! ;) We'll have to discuss over coffee soon! Just wanted to let you know not to wait up for me. Hope your night is swell! \_

\_XOXO \_

Chizuru smiled, glad to know that Sen's date was going well, but a little wary about wanting to know of her night. She knew she wouldn't tell her the whole night she was putting herself through. She quickly sent a reply to Sen before opening Kazama's.

\_Chizuru, \_

\_I've selected a restaurant downtown I've been wanting to talk you to. You'll love it, reminds me of home. I'll pick you up around 8:30, our reservations are at 9. \_

A cold feeling sunk in the pit of her stomach as she double checked the message and then the clock on her phone. It was going on 7:30...and they had just taken their orders. Her mind worked fast as it went through her possibilities of leaving before that to get to her dorm on time before Kazama showed up. Was it possible?

She sighed deeply and frowned at her reflection. What was she going to do? \_It's obvious!\_ She thought rationally. \_Tell the guys you have other plansâ€”priorities.\_ Chizuru watched as her frown deepened and her eyes echoed how much she disliked that thought. It shouldn't have been such a tough decision, she knew. But it was.

\_But Okita...\_ She lowered her head, tempted to turn on the faucet and splash cold water on her face. But the little bit of make up would not appreciate that. She didn't want to upset him. And when would she get a chance to get to know the guys? He went through so much trouble \_and\_ she made a deal. Could she really bum free coffee from him every morning?

Chizuru wasn't sure how long she stood there, hands gripping the side of the sink and her head ducked, with her eyes squeezed shut in concentration before her phone buzzed on the counter.

Quickly she snatched the phone, hoping with all her might that it was Kazama telling her he had to cancelâ€”last minute like all the times before. But it wasn't from him, it was from Okita. She opened the text.

\_Chizuruâ€”\_

\_I sincerely hope u did not fall in & u r instead doin' girly shit that all girls do when they go into bathrooms 2gether. (which is weird, btw.) \_

\_But, hurry. I can only take these assholes so much. \_

\_: ) \_

Chizuru didn't even realize she was smiling until she caught it in her reflection. Her eyes were bright and the earlier worry was completely gone. Why \_was\_ she having such a difficult time making a decision when it was obvious on what she should do? Before she could lose her nerve, she opened a text and came up with a quick, but stable excuse.

When it was sent, she stuffed her phone back into her pocket without a second look, took in a deep breath to calm herself only to realize she didn't need. She knew she should've found it strange that she wasn't nervous about what he would say or if he'd get angry, but

she'd have her chance to explain later.

Kazama would just have to understand that she did have things to do and that sometimes, she could cancel on him too.

\* \* \*

><p>Okita didn't even realize he was nervous for the dinner until he was seated there and his so-called friends were giving Chizuru a lot harder of a time than he thought they would. Hijikata was not exaggerating when he mentioned they weren't too keen on his new friendship. He also knew that they were all wondering what his real motives were.<p>

But, like he also figured, he knew they would instantly warm up to Chizuru like he had. Although, his reaction to her was much more first sight kind of thing, he had no doubt. She just had that kind of zing to her that effected everyone around her. Even douche boyfriends like Kazama. He wondered what the scum had been spewing to Chizuru earlier...but it wasn't his business. He didn't like to be reminded of his existence and one would think that being friends with Chizuru would defeat that purpose, but it didn't.

In fact, every time he was around her he didn't once think of himâ€”or much about anyone else, really. His eyes swung back to the bathroom door, hoping for it to open up and reveal Chizuru to him. she wasn't even gone for five minutes and he was already feeling antsy. Yes, he was very aware of his behavior and his hand on the back of her chair.

He had to admit, that it was a last minute ditch when the sober, un-distracted part of his mind reminded him rather harshly that she wasn't available to make a move on. Thus, his hand landed on the back of her chair rather than her shoulder. It was tough, but he made it work. It was easy to do when Chizuru had him amused and made him laugh. But at the same time, it was even harder to keep his hands to himself.

Would it really be so bad if he touched her? Like, say, on the hand? Or maybe her shoulder like he almost did? The back of his mind was screaming at him as he indulged those thoughts. Okita didn't want to give Chizuru the wrong idea about him and he was honest when he had mentioned that he didn't flirt with girls who had boyfriendsâ€”at least girls he actually cared about, which would make her the first.

And did he care about her? Part of him knew the answer, but the other part still wanted to remain persistent with it's denial. It was easier.

His eyes pulled away from the bathroom door and he glanced around the table, the guys were staring at him questioningly. Okita quirked an eyebrow, making a grab for his soda.

"What?" he asked before taking a sip.

They each exchanged a look, sans Heisuke who was playing a game on his phone, before Sanosuke finally sighed. "I guess I'll be the one to say it then," he mumbled, shaking his head.

"What are you doing?" Saito asked, smoothly interrupting Sanosuke.

Okita glanced down at his drink before slowly lifting it up. "Drinking my soda and having dinner with friends," he answered with a wide smirk.

"Seriously," Sanosuke gave him a hard glare. "If you're just fucking around with her because of who she's datingâ€"

Instantly he slammed his fist down on the table, rattling the silverware and plates around them. His eyes narrowed at him and he lowered his voice. "Glad to know what you think of me." He glanced at the others, "\_All \_of you."

Heisuke shook his head, "He didn't mean to offend you. We didn't." He sighed, crossing his arms. "But come on! You don't do friendships with girls, you never have. And we all know how much you hate Kazama..."

"I wouldn't use her," he answered harshly. "Chizuru is my\_ friend\_. You either get on board, or shut the fuck up and look the other way. She's not going anywhere unless\_ I\_ say so."

The guys stayed silent and Sanosuke spoke up, "It's not against \_her\_, you know." He mumbled, "It's \_you\_."

Okita nodded once, knowing exactly what he meant. Yeah, he was good deep down, but sometimes, it was the outside that most only got to know about. "I know that." His eyes swung back to the door, "But when it's been \_really\_ important, have I ever let you guys down? Strayed you wrong?"

Again, the guys kept quiet. He knew that he was right, they did too because he never had. They were his only family he hadâ€"other than his sisters who were halfway across the countryâ€"and they were the ones that had each other's back like none other. He would never do anything to jeopardize their future just to fuck with someone he hated.

He wished he could vocalize what he was doing, what his friendship with Chizuru meant. But he wasn't really sure of it either. Okita couldn't blame them for getting all bend out of shape about it. Okita was the most unreasonable of the bunch and he knew he wouldn't be so cozy with something like that if one of the guys were doing what he was.

"Hijikata mentioned you guys had worries," He shrugged and sat back in his chair, his fingers twitching slightlyâ€"aching to set back on the back of Chizuru's chair. It felt weird to do so when she wasn't there, though. "So I figured if you met her, you'd shut up."

Okita spread his hands open, gesturing to the empty plates and drinks around them. "And thus came about this." He leaned forward again, "And it's on me."

Shinpachi's features immediately brightened, "If this dinner is on you, then I think I can get aboard on this whole friendship with that chick ordeal, no problem."



Heisuke rolled his eyes, "Her name is Chizuru, you cheapskate dip." Shinpachi glared at him and was quick to make a swipe at him, to which, Heisuke ducked away from it.

"Watch it, Heisuke. You're still a pledge," he grumbled, quirking an eyebrow.

"Children, children...please." Sanosuke smirked, "Chizuru will come back and you two need to be on your best behavior."

Okita gave a solid nod, "He's got a point. She's polite, so she won't call you out on your shit. So knock it off!" Instantly his eyes swung to the bathroom door and he finally saw it open, revealing Chizuru. Her hair swung in her face and she quickly pushed it away. Next she paused, pulled at the hem of her shirt before pressing her palms on her jeans—which he thought looked fabulously on her curves.

In fact, her whole outfit had him catching his breath. Sure he'd seen her in casual wear, all the time, every morning but something about this made it seem more...\_personal\_. Almost like...the dinner was just for them two and not all of them. The pink of her shirt went well with the tone of her soft skin and made her face even brighter when she blushed.

Chizuru lifted her gaze and they instantly landed on his. Her lips curved up slightly and a very small blush stained her cheeks before she dropped her gaze and headed towards them. Okita smirked to himself and gave the group one final warning glare just as Chizuru reached the table.

"Welcome back," he greeted, amused to see her blush again.

"Did I miss much?" she asked, tipping her head to the side and revealing the smooth creamy pale skin of her neck. It was a neck that begged to be nibbled at and he could easily picture placing love bites on it. He pulled himself back, snapping him from his momentary lapse of thought.

"Just a few antics between Dumb and Dumber," He gestured to Heisuke and Shinpachi, "But other than that, no."

Shinpachi waved Okita off, "Bah," he leaned forward, eyes trained solely on Chizuru. It almost made Okita hit him, but he resisted the urge. "Okita just let us know that this dinner is on him. \_Completely\_ on him. So that means don't hold back."

Okita sighed, "Don't go giving her ideas, Shinpachi." He glanced at Chizuru and gave her a look, "This is—or rather, \_he\_ is—the reason I don't take the guys out too often. He gets ridiculous when the bill is on anyone else. Just a warning."

Chizuru gave a dutiful nod, a smile poking through her features. Shinpachi snorted, "And if you knew the reason I'm taking advantage is because Okita is penny pinching grinch, you'd take \_my\_ \_side\_ and follow \_my\_ \_example\_."

Okita quirked an eyebrow, amused. "If I offered to pay for all your meals, Shinpachi. I wouldn't make it through the week with what I've earned." He narrowed his eyes, "That's why you're always broke."

Heisuke laughed, nudging Shinpachi knowingly. "Isn't that the truth."

Sanosuke smiled, "Come on now, guys..." He reached over and patted Shinpachi's shoulders. "He's a growing boy, he needs his 6 square meals a day."

Shinpachi's face pinched comically and Okita heard Chizuru try to stifle a laugh. Shinpachi immediately opened his mouth to retort, but the waitress arrived right then with all their orders. She set down her large platter that held 6 different, good smelling foods. All the fight instantly vanished from Shinpachi's eyes and was replaced with an overjoyed expression.

The waitress, bumbling just a few times, managed not to spill anything as she set down everyone's plate and finally tried to smile through her embarrassed routine. "Can I get you anything else?" she asked, eyes lingering just a fraction longer on Sanosuke on the other end.

He smiled, shaking his head. "No, thanks, darling. We're good."

Okita rolled his eyes and Shinpachi grunted under his breath, but was quickly quieted as he dug in. The waitress seemed to dawdle before she walked away, stars in her eyes Okita was sure. He often wondered if Sanosuke did what he did on purpose...

He didn't think of it much, his own food drawing his thoughts and attention. When was the last time he ate? If he was honest, the donuts he had earlier was the only thing he actually consumedâ€"other than his daily coffee, since he was anxious about dinner. He hadn't realized how hungry he really was until the food was sitting in front of him.

Okita cast a look over at Chizuru who was happily, and quite impressively, chowing down on her supposed 'light' dinner. She didn't eat her salad with the reverence one normally saw in a girl around guys, no, she stabbed at the lettuce with feeling and her other hand automatically reached one of the sides the guys ordered for her.

He automatically smiled, glad to see that she wasn't holding herself back. He wasn't sure why she had ordered a salad and he knew the guys weren't going to let her get away with that. Okita watched as she gently lowered her fork, pushed the half eaten salad away and pulled the basket of fries over.

She smiled brightly as she squirted ketchup all over them and he got the vibe that she was finally relaxed. Okita pursed his lips slightly, taking a bite out of his double bacon burger. He noticed earlier that she was tense, but he figured it was mostly because of the guys. He glanced over at her again and she met his glance.

Chizuru blinked, finished off the fry she held and wiped her mouth daintily with her napkin. "What...?" she asked quietly, her eyes darting away briefly.

"You going to hog all the ketchup?" he asked, smirking and playing

off getting caught staring.

She shook her head and pushed the ketchup bottle over before she returned her attention to the food. Okita stared a little longer before he took the ketchup and poured it over his fries and added it to his burger.

Okita wasn't sure why he found her fascinating at that very moment, but he did. He liked seeing her laugh in between bites of food, the way she covered her mouth with her hand or napkin, the way she easily ate off of all the extra sides, and the way she easily made conversation with the guys. It was like she had known them for a long time and she wasn't at all out of place.

Before he even realized it, dinner had been eaten, cleared out by the waitress and the check sat untouched closest to him as the group chattedâ€”laughing louder and louder with each passing story. His eyes zeroed in on Chizuru, her eyes bright and cheeks flushed as if she were drinking something stronger than soda.

Instantly his mind wandered about the different kinds of flushes her face could pull. The more he let himself indulge, the dirtier they got and he shifted in his seat. Chizuru seemed to catch the movement and she shifted, her smile softening as she turned her attention to him.

"This was really fun," she sighed, leaning back in her chair.

Okita smirked, "We're a pretty fun group of guys,"

Shinpachi nodded from across the table, "And this is us sober, imagine what a touch of alcohol can do."

Chizuru's smile widened, "That sounds...dangerous, actually."

Okita chuckled, shaking his head. "Oh, it's worse." His fingers twitched to reach out towards Chizuru's hand, an overwhelming desire surged through him, wanting nothing more than to hold her hand. To touch her. Instead, he finally reached for the checkâ€”only slightly afraid to see the amount.

Chizuru quickly reached into her pocket and fished out a few dollars, to which Okita caught out of the corner of his eye. His eyebrows slammed over his eyes and he reached out swatted her hands. Her eyes widened rather comically and she opened her mouth to immediately protestâ€”but the others came to his rescue.

"Chizuru, if you dare reach for your wallet or purse or whatever you may be holding your money," Sanosuke's eyes shifted slightly over her, making Okita annoyed. "Then we will all find a way to give you back to you."

She frowned and slowly pulled her hand away from Okita, who rather liked the reason she gave him to touch her. Heisuke shifted in his seat, turning his attention towards her he leaned in. "We may not look it, but we are a table full of gentlemenâ€”and we won't allow you to pay for a damn thing. Get use to it."

Shinpachi pointed at Heisuke and nodded, "True that." He gave her a wide grin, "So get use to it. Especially if Okita's got the

check."

Okita raised his eyebrows, but cracked a smile regardless. "We're polite douches, can't help it. It's the way we were raised."

Chizuru finally let her shoulders sag with defeat, her eyes bouncing to each face. Even Saito was giving her a slightly stern look. Finally, she nodded and leaned back in her seat, her hands folded neatly in front of her and in full view of the others. They each gave her a huge smile as a reward, which only further enhanced hers.

By the time the waitress swung back to pick up the check and drop off the change— to which Okita waved her away again, telling her to keep the change, the guys were all preparing to leave. Chizuru sat up in her chair, looking unsure as to if she should wait or follow their lead.

Okita gave her a sly smirk and nodded in a way that she understood completely. She stilled her fidgeting and waited patiently, just as Okita leaned towards her and whispered, "I'll walk you back." Her face flushed lightly and she nodded simply, her eyes not wavering from the guys.

"Later, Chizuru." Heisuke waved, flashing her his signature wide and carefree smile.

Sanosuke tipped his head, "We'll be seeing you."

Shinpachi leaned over his friend's shoulder, "Come by the house, you're an honorary member now." He winked, "Maybe you can bring some cookies or something!"

Saito swiftly jabbed Shinpachi in the stomach with his elbow, "Have a pleasant night." He mumbled, his face softening into the closest thing to a smile.

Chizuru waved and beamed at them, "Good night guys,"

Okita watched as Chizuru's wide smile shrank to a small and peaceful smile that he liked much more. Slowly she turned her attention to Okita and blushed lightly when she caught him staring, not that he made an attempt to look away. "You ready?" he asked, tilting his head and letting his fingers finally touch her arm in the slightest way.

Chizuru jumped only slightly from the brief touch, but didn't try to move away. She only nodded and he gave a nod back, standing up as she grabbed the few things she came with. He watched as she powered her cellphone on, her eyes widening as she caught glance of the time. Her eyes raised up to his in question.

"It's not really that late, is it?" she asked, blinking rapidly. The look was cute and Okita had to turn his attention away to keep from continually staring at her...or kissing her. It was getting to be more problematic.

Okita spotted a clock hung on the wall and gestured to it, a smirk pulling at his lips. "Check for yourself,"

Chizuru spun towards the clock, stared at her phone again before

looking back at the clock once more. Her eyebrows furrowed and she sighed, her expression bordered depressed and it wiped all the humor from Okita's. Did she have somewhere else to be...? He couldn't help but hope that if she did, she had unintentionally missed it due to having a good time with them.

The mere thought that she might have had other plans bothered him. It settled, like lead, on his shoulders and made him want to punch someone—someone? His fingers twitched slightly with the thought and he stuffed them into his front pockets. "You got somewhere to be?" he asked, trying to keep his voice level.

She turned to look at him and shook her head, his shoulders automatically relaxed. "No, I just..." she ducked her head, "Last time I was unaware of how time escaped me and that led to the whole—" Chizuru pressed her hands together and Okita knew instantly she was thinking about getting mugged. The look in her eyes were starting venture back to that night and he struggled to keep his anger in check. He hadn't nearly hurt the stranger enough and he wished he had hit him harder, or something. Okita reached over and tugged on the end of her ponytail.

Instantly, her eyes focused and looked up at him. "Don't worry," he told her, leaning down towards her. "I'll be your eyes. I've got your back and I won't let something like that happen to you ever again. Scouts honor."

Chizuru smiled, her body relaxing. "Thanks." She mumbled, her eyes narrowing slightly. "You weren't a boy scout, were you?"

Okita shrugged, "For about a day, but that still counts, right?" he asked, leading her out of the restaurant. They would soon be closing, probably as soon as they walked out the door. Chizuru laughed lightly, the sound twinkling and light to his ears. He liked making her laugh—liked knowing that she laughed for him. He felt envious during dinner that he wasn't the only one making her do so.

\_Calm yourself.\_ He thought rationally, but he knew that it was already too late to talk sense into him.

The night was pretty chill, hinting to what the winter would bring about but not quite that cold that Okita felt he could offer Chizuru his light jacket...or appropriate to pull her into a hug. Chizuru hunkered down in her own thin jacket, cheeks slightly flushed. It gave him a thought about her in the winter wind. Snowflakes in her hair, scarf covering up to her nose and cheeks a pretty red that looked like she was embarrassed.

A smile touched his lips at the thought and his hand started to reach for her, but he caught himself. He shoved his hand in his pocket and dug his nails into his palms, roughly. It worked to keep his thoughts on track. Chizuru sighed softly and kept her eyes glued to the sidewalk in front of her. The walk back was mostly quiet, surprisingly, but Okita didn't push it.

He liked just watching her and the silence helped him keep an ear open around them. He had meant what he said to her, he wasn't going to let anything like that happen to her ever again. So long as he could, he would. The thought dragged him to Kazama and he ground his teeth together to keep from cursing out loud. But it was his job to

keep an eye on his girlfriend" did the douche even really care? Okita idly wondered if Kazama knew at all. The thought that only Okita knew both pleased and angered him. He didn't want that experience to be what connected them.

Chizuru lifted her head and glanced at him, her eyebrows furrowed. "Can I ask you something?" she mumbled, almost too quietly and quickly. Okita smirked, his mind going back to the other night when they talked and became friends and she asked him if how he knew he could trust her. Her eyes widened slightly as she realized what she said and she pressed her lips together.

He gave her a nod, "Always can." Okita nudged her gently, "What's up?"

She turned her head away for a moment, looking like she was trying to figure out how to say what she was thinking. He wanted to know what went through her head, he was curious how her mind worked"even though he was getting the hang of it through their texts and daily interactions.

"I...I cancelled on Kazama today." She finally told him, pulling her eyes up to his. Okita tried hard not to show disgust towards the name that he was growing to hate more and more and try not to smile that she did that. For him, no doubt. "I just...is it normal to not feel guilty about it?" she asked, her eyes reflecting her growing worry and slight confusion.

Okita pressed his lips together to keep from saying the first thing on his mind, which at the current point was Fuck yes. That was his biased opinion, considering he liked that she was slowly withdrawing herself from him. The thought of her finally breaking free from the douche shook him in both pleasant and unpleasant ways. Was that what he wanted?

Surely, she deserved better than Kazama...but better than himself as well.

Chizuru sighed softly, "I mean, I can talk to Sen about this...I suppose. It's just..." she shrugged, "I feel like she wouldn't be honest about this, you know? She'll tell me what she thinks I want to hear, but I just want to know. Kazama has been promising and cancelling his plans with me all week and nothing has been what I had first imagined it to be. I" Chizuru shook her head and forced a tight lipped smile. "Sorry, you really don't want to hear about this and I already asked you my question..."

Okita stopped and tugged on her arm, making her pause. "Chizuru, will you shut up for a minute?" he asked lightly, smirking down at her. She snapped her mouth shut and she nodded, her features softening softly with unspoken relief.

She wanted honesty? He'd give it to her, at least, as honest as he could get. "You want to know if it's okay you didn't feel guilty for ditching your precious Student Council president boyfriend? Yes, I abso-fucking-tively think it's okay. If he can't make time for you, why should you be the one to wait on the sidelines until he has the time? You had other plans, and think, what if he had cancelled again and you left early?" Chizuru's expression pinched slightly and he resisted the urge to smile.

"In my \_honest \_opinion, you did the right thing. Give him a taste of his own medicine, show him you aren't willing to wait on the sidelines. This is a different world than high schoolâ€"I should know, but if it's meant to be...this whole cancelling, guilty, and whatnot will work itself out. If not for the better." Okita shrugged casually and started to walk again. "Simple as that. You shouldn't over think it, sounds like you have a pretty great gut instinct. Listen to it more often." He winked.

The worry evaporated from her eyes and they turned warm and bright in the dark setting. Okita was reminded of the stars and how her eyes sparkled like them. She nudged him with her own elbow as she smiled up at him, grateful and pleased.

"Thank you." She told him, her voice just as warm as her eyes.

Okita shrugged again, trying to appear unaffected by her warmth. "Anytime." He tipped his head back, "Just please stop bombarding me with all your girly problems, Chizuru! Geezus fuck, you're starting to offend me!"

Chizuru laughed, her hand instantly covering her mouth as she tried to stifle it but failed. Her shoulders shook and the corners of her eyes crinkled slightly. "Sorry, I'll keep that in mind!" The rest of the walk was peaceful, with Chizuru talking to him about her classes and a few random things. Okita realized then that he liked listening to her talkâ€"especially when she started to talk about something she really liked, like their English class. Her voice would take on a lighter tone and she would start to use her hands, it was cute.

They reached her dorm building much too fast and he wished it wasn't a weekday, or he'd have invited her over to the house. To do what, he had no idea, but he was sure she wouldn't mind spending more time with the guys. Fuck, if girls could been in Fraternity's, she'd definitely be a shoe in for theirs. Okita idly wondered if there was some loophole to get her to pledge...

"Thanks for walking me home," She looked up at him and smiled, her cheeks still slightly flushed from the walk. He imagined pushing her against the door and just kissing her, something to make her cheeks flush a deeper red that he was growing to enjoy seeing. When she blushed, it seemed to compliment her whole face. "And for being honest with me. It was a test and you passed."

Okita chuckled, his hands finding their way into his jean pockets again. \_Don't stare at her lips again, douche. Keep yourself in check. \_He thought over and over. He'd never had to pretend he wasn't attracted to someone before and fuck if it wasn't challenging. "That's what friends do," His eyes pulled away from hers and he looked up at the building, "And you may not know it, but I too, am a whiz at tests." That earned him a wide smile from Chizuru and he felt lighter than air.

"Well, I'll see you tomorrow then..." She scanned her ID to enter and opened the door. "Remember what you promised, sir." Chizuru glanced back at him, trying hard to level him with what she probably thought was a stern look. A ladybug looked more menacing than she did.

Okita felt the edge of his lips start to tip up, "I remember." He

lifted his hands in the air. "Just remember what the loophole in that promise." Chizuru sighed and rolled her eyes, but the smile still touched her lips. With that, she waved and started to turn away. Okita hated the sight of watching her walk away. Was it selfish of him to just want to squeeze more time with her?

Before he realized it, he grabbed the door before it closed and leaned in. "Oi, Chizuru!" he called, startling both himself and her. Chizuru spun towards him quickly, her eyebrows furrowed and eyes wide.

"Yeah...?" she asked, her eyes searching his as she tried to figure what was wrong.

He gave her a smile and she instantly relaxed. "Sorry, I forgot to mention that this weekend is the First mixer blah-blah of the year. Fraternity Sorority thing..." Okita shrugged, honestly he didn't give a shit. "I like to think of it as a celebration of the first win of the Underground Season. You should come. Bring your friend."

Chizuru stared at him for a moment and in that short moment, Okita actually feared that she might say no. He didn't like that. Finally she gave a short and firm nod, "I'll think about it..." she finally told him. He knew he couldn't rush her into something like that—he guessed she didn't have much experience with parties. He still had a day to convince her and he knew he could.

Okita nodded back, giving her his reserved mischievous grin. "You do that." He leaned back, "Later."

With that, he pulled back and let the door close. He watched as Chizuru smiled softly, more so to herself, and then turned away towards the stairs. As soon as she was gone, he started to walk away. Already he felt the absence of her presence and he mumbled a curse under his breath. The silence, something he used to enjoy when about by himself, was not as comforting as it once was.

\_Shit.\_

\* \* \*

><p>"How is everything?"<p>

Chizuru gave a small smile but more so apologetic look to the barista who took her order. She handed him a twenty and gestured to him to keep the change—it was the least she could do. But when her phone started to ring and she realized it was her father, well...she couldn't afford to miss it. The barista only shot her a tight lipped smile, but couldn't argue the generous tip.

She switched the phone to her other shoulder, wedged it between her shoulder and cheek while taking the two cups of coffee. "Thank you," she whispered to the barista, offering another apologetic look which she only waved off. "Everything? It's great, dad. Great." Chizuru winced at the hot cups and quickly set them down in order to slip coffee sleeves over them.

"You sound rushed," her father noted, a little huffy. "Have I inconvenienced you?"



Chizuru resisted the urge to sigh and tell him yes, but that was not how one spoke to their fatherâ€”at least not hers. "No, no! I'm just," She pressed her lips together, trying to think up of a lie. "I'm just out of shape, I was walking down the stairsâ€”I'm out of breath is all." Not a complete lie, considering trying to multitask was daunting.

"You should really make that a weekly regiment, Chizuru." He admonished, and she could picture him giving her a stern look. The crinkle in his forehead, his hands steeped in front of him. "Exercise is important. But regardless, I called to check up with your classes and school. It's nearly been a month, are you adapting to the change?" he asked. In other words, had she changed her mind yet?

"I have, dad. Everything's good so far, but it just started really. I love my classes." She readjusted the drinks in her hand as she maneuvered out the door, wishing then that she had asked for a cup carrier. "How's work? And Kaoru?"

Chizuru already knew the answer, but she asked anyway because she knew he'd answer. Anything to drag the attention away from her. Her father cleared his throat and she automatically furrowed her brow, her father was rarely ever sick...her brother had mentioned before that he was taking more time off than normal.

"You okay...?" she asked, eyebrows furrowing. It was hard to do when she was concentrating on balancing the drinks and phone. Her head was cocked to the side and other students were staring at her curiously, she tried hard to pay attention to her conversation with her dad. "Kaoru mentioned that youâ€”"

"I'm \_fine\_." He snipped, cutting her off. "Nothing I can't handle and something that the others are over exaggerating about. You cough once and they decide you shouldn't be around other patients." He huffed into the phone. "Kaoru has been doing well, from what his teachers have said, he's already showing very promising work. I couldn't be more proud."

"That's...great dad." Chizuru didn't have the energy to roll her eyes. When she reached the door to the building where her English class took place, she wanted to scream. She couldn't open the door easily and she was sure she looked hysterical trying to open the door, with two coffee cups and her head pressed to her shoulderâ€”her reflection looked pretty comical.

"Uhhâ€”" Chizuru managed to open the door a little and wedged her foot in the crack, kicking it open. After that, the trip to her classroom was uneventful. "I almost have to get to class though..."

"Ah, yes, that's right." Her father hummed on the other line, "I'll keep in touch. Kazama mentioned something about having free time soon, as did Kaoru so I'm thinking about a family dinner soon. Ok?"

Chizuru wanted to say no, but that also wasn't something you ever said to her father. "Alright. Let me know. Love you."

"Yes, me too."

Entering the classroom, she spotted Okita but still couldn't comfortably walk up the stairs, having no way to pocket her phone without it falling to the ground and possibly, damaging the touch screen. Before she could even blink or call out to him, he was in front of her taking both coffee cups. Chizuru shot him a grateful smile.

"Thanks." She grabbed her phone, put the sound on mute and pocketed it. After, she stretched and rubbed her neck, having held it rigidly to her shoulder really put a number on it. Okita quirked an eyebrow curiously, "That was my dad. He sometimes calls...at the worst possible times." She gestured to the coffee cups and shook her head. "Case and point."

Okita smirked, "You do realize you could've gotten a cup holder right...?" he gave her a skeptical glance and she automatically ducked her head with embarrassment.

"Yeah, I kind of...thought of that after the fact." She sighed, shaking her head. "Talking to dad does that to me."

Okita handed her a donut and her coffee, to which she took eagerly as she trudged to her seat—feeling suddenly very wary and tired, despite a decent amount of sleep. If she were honest, her night mostly consisted of tossing and turning mostly because her mind was still on the dinner she had with Okita and his Frat. They were nothing like she would have originally thought and she felt ashamed she even judged them before she knew them.

Not only that, but her cellphone had multiple texts of Kazama asking about her choice to cancel on him—even going as far as to get 'Very Upset' with her for doing so last minute, since he could've then picked up on some Student Council business he pushed off on someone else or something. She tried hard not to get angry over the text, but she couldn't help it. How was it possible he didn't see this problem when he canceled on her all the time?

Chizuru had, very wisely, only responded a 'Sorry. We'll talk later. Good night.' Back to his very collected text responses, she was almost surprised that he didn't just show up at her dorm, but he only called her once and his voice mail was a simple 'Call me back.' And even after all that, she still didn't feel an ounce of guilt.

In fact, the only guilt she was harboring at all was how she had had the intention of leaving the dinner Okita had carefully set up for them. She wanted to tell him, but she was afraid of what he would say or how he would react. She just got him to be friends with her and their texts and daily conversations weren't something she wanted to jeopardize. How messed up was that?

She sighed, welcoming the usually uncomfortable wooden seat beneath her. Okita took a long sip of his coffee and grimaced slightly, he pulled it away and popped the top. Chizuru was just about to sip hers when he gently pulled it away from her. Chizuru blinked up at him as he switched the drinks, giving her a small smirk.

"I've got your much too sweet latte," he took a huge drink of his own and nodded in awe. "That's better. Seriously, how can you drink something so freaking sweet? It's like pure sugar."

Chizuru smiled, "I'm sorry," she shook her head.

"Your conversation with your dad that bad?" he asked, shifting in his seat to face her. Chizuru poked at the sleeve on her cup, her fingers tracing up and down the ridges on it. She shrugged halfheartedly and then moved her fingers to her donut, not caring that her fingers were getting sticky as she started to pick it apart.

"He just..." She pressed her lips together as she tried hard to find the correct words. It wasn't like she hated him, or anything like that but...he did more often than not, upset her with his careless manner of speaking. That, and how she never seemed to do the right thing for him. He intimidated her. "He stresses me out."

Okita quirked an eyebrow in a curious way, "And he hovers." He seemed to state it more than ask, his eyes scanning her for some sort of sign that he was right. She gave a firm nod, popping a piece of donut in her mouth and forcing it down.

"He hovers. He disapproves." She shrugged, frowning. There was a lot of things she wanted to say, but how did she say it without sounding horrible? Her father was paying for her school—"despite him not approving of her major. He keeps in touch with her, despite his demanding schedule. Overall, he was a good father even though he was hardheaded and didn't really ask for her or her brother's opinion.

She opened her mouth to take what she said back, but her phone vibrated and she pulled it out, hoping it wasn't her father. But it was just another text from Kazama. Her stress increased and she didn't bother to read it, instead she just stuffed the phone back into her pocket. Kazama knew she had class and, at the moment, she just didn't want to deal with him.

Chizuru dropped her head into her hands, knowing that she was probably over thinking the whole thing...again. But how was it that he didn't get it? She pressed her lips together, wondering if she wasn't friends with Okita if she'd even be thinking like that. It just didn't feel like she'd lose much behaving this way with him, but she knew that she'd have to talk to him soon. That's what couples did. But she already decided that he needed to simmer on the whole thing.

Okita was right. She was doing the right thing. Chizuru just needed to stay strong and keep reminding herself of that. Slowly she lifted her head and instantly glanced over at Okita, his gaze deep and piercing—and suddenly it all felt right. The rational part of her mind tried to reason with that, but she wasn't listening.

"Alright, class!" The Professor started from the front of the class and Chizuru magically found the strength to pull her eyes away from his, but not before he smiled at her knowingly. She felt the start of her blush, beyond embarrassed for staring at him like an idiot, and was quick to pull her notebook and textbook out.

Not even five minutes later, she noticed Okita slowly lean over towards her out of the corner of her eye. She turned her head slightly, shifting her glance between her and the Professor as discreetly as she could—a little thing she learned to master

throughout the last week. Okita liked to put his two-cents in every once in a while and putting him in line of her vision was usually better for her and her hair—or any other part of her that Okita could tug on, and it seemed to please him to have her attention.

Though she was assuming he was pleased, judging by the crinkle by his eyes and the way they lit up just a fraction. She tried hard not to frown at herself. How hard was she watching and studying him that she knew that?

"So, on a different, probably lighter note..." Okita leaned over even further, if possible, without out-rightly looking like he wasn't paying attention and lowered his voice. The tone was so low that it was as if she could feel them skate over her skin in an insanely intimate way. "Have you decided about the party, yet?"

Chizuru pursed her lips, trying hard to look like she was paying attention to the Professor. Honestly, she wished she didn't have to answer him but knew what would happen if she ignored him. He had no qualms doing it when they didn't know each other and he certainly didn't now. Really, she had thought about it for a while and even entertained the idea—but in the end, she came to the same thought. No.

She didn't even mention it to Sen, she knew once she did the decision would be made for her. But, did she really want to see girls throw themselves at Okita...or any of the guys from his frat? Was that really her crowd? Sorority girls sort of annoyed her—at least the ones in her class did, add alcohol to the mix? She was one hundred percent positive that their annoying qualities would only increase.

Chizuru wasn't even sure how to act at a so called Mixer, whatever that was. She knew it was obviously a party, but...she had no idea what really went on at a college party. Sure she'd heard things, but she wasn't so sure she believed them. She wasn't sure she wanted to see if they were true or not. Besides that, she never drank before. Ever.

Her father was very strict and her brother was worse. Kazama didn't ever go to any of them, so it wasn't like he could take her or vice versa. Chizuru didn't want to make a fool of herself in front of her new friends—or Okita with her inexperience.

"Uh—well—"

Okita shook his head, his eyebrows doing that thing where they hunkered down over his emerald eyes in a no-nonsense sort of way. Completely different from Kazama, in a better way, but just as effective. "Chizuru, don't you dare lie to me." His seemed to spark slightly, as if challenging her to do so, like he wouldn't get mad if she did, or something. She wasn't really sure what to make of it.

She sighed and shook her head, "I haven't...yet." She spared a glance at the Professor who was currently speaking to the class with his back turned, as he wrote notes on the whiteboard. Mindlessly, she started to scribble away in her notebook.

"Well, it's tomorrow." He rested his chin on his hand, his head tipped slightly to the right as he looked at her—watched her, write her notes down. Chizuru noticed that he only occasionally wrote things down, usually on paper he borrowed from her. "But you should go. Like, indefinitely."

Chizuru's shoulders sagged slightly and she glanced at him, "Are you sure you really want me at your party...?" she asked, furrowing her brow. She hated feeling insecure, but really, he wouldn't miss her if she didn't go. "I have...I mean. I haven't gone to many parties..." She shifted in her seat and continued copying notes.

Okita leaned over and plucked her pen from her hand, "You're a terrible liar, Chizuru. Has anyone ever told you that?" Chizuru watched as he waved her pen in front of her face and she couldn't stop the burning blush that formed. No one had ever said that, but then again, she didn't making lying a habit.

She pressed her lips together, feeling her eyebrows crease as she thought about the pros and cons again. It was a hard feat to do with Okita watching her intently as he waited. "Alright." She finally conceded, resisting the urge to groan in defeat...or worse, throw up from the anxious and nervous energy bouncing around her.

Okita only responded with a wide and bright smile, ones she rarely saw but ones he mostly did around her. She liked to think they were specifically for her. Reluctantly, the rest of the class went uneventful, Okita didn't even try to distract her, a small pleased smile plastered to his face that had butterflies fluttering about in her stomach. When the bell finally rang to dismiss them, he popped to his feet and helped Chizuru gather her things.

She laughed, "You seem pretty energetic..." she handed her trash to Okita and he shrugged in response.

"It's just starting to look like a great start to the weekend is all...might be the sugar and coffee too, though." He tossed away the trash and turned towards her, "Aren't you?"

Chizuru couldn't help the smile, though she wanted to act nonchalant about it. Her first thought was to jump up and down and shout, but she didn't think that was appropriate either. She opened her mouth to answer him, but his features instantly morphed into a dark look. His smile vanished as his lips pressed into a thin tight line, his jaw twitched slightly like he was grinding his teeth together, and his eyes were no longer their playful light green but a deep dark and sharp emerald. The look gave her shivers, but she realized he wasn't looking at her anymore.

She followed his gaze, over her shoulder and towards the entrance of the classroom. Chizuru tensed when her eyes landed on her boyfriend—Kazama, waiting for her. His deep wine colored eyes zeroed in on her and then narrowed when they shifted to Okita, standing right behind her. She felt a cold sensation in the pit of her stomach and skate over her skin, she wasn't so sure she was ready to admit her friendship just yet...nor talk to Kazama in general.

"Well, fuck. Spoke too soon." She heard Okita mumbled, but Chizuru couldn't answer him. "See ya later."

Chizuru still didn't answer him, nor glance at him but felt his warmth leave her side and the cold instantly took over. At least he left through the back entrance and she had to thank him later for it. She watched as Kazama's eyes watched, intently, as Okita left before finally looking back at her. His gaze softened just a fraction and he held out his hand, motioning for her to hurry up and get to him.

She resisted the urge to shake her head and follow Okita, if she hurried, she could still catch him. But, that wouldn't be good. She tried to push the cold feeling away, reminding herself that this was her boyfriend, she knew him, and although she was mad at him, she was for good reason. Her feet finally started working and she swung her backpack on as she made her way towards him.

His hand wrapped itself immediately around her shoulder and the hand felt more like a claim rather than out of affection or apology. Chizuru pressed her lips together and she kept her eyes fixed ahead of her, refusing to buckle down like she knew he thought she would. Kazama's hands tightened just slightly on her shoulder.

"Is he still bothering you?" he asked her, a soft edge to his voice.

Chizuru shook her head and tried not to laugh out in an angry way. "Is that what you came to see me for?" she asked, still not bothering to spare him with a glance. She was proud of herself, she didn't have even the slightest notion to cave to him. "To talk about Okita...?"

She felt him tense next to her, probably because she spoke his name and she resisted the urge to roll her eyes. Admittedly, she was pushing at him a little and he did have reason to feel threatened by him, but he was avoiding the real reason he was there and she wasn't in the mood to hear him lecture about him again. If he did, she wasn't so sure she'd be able to keep her thoughts or the truth quiet.

"You know he'sâ€" Kazama cut himself off and he was silent for a moment, to collect his thoughts. Chizuru had to admit, he was perceptive and smart enough to rethink what he said. But she supposed that was what made him a good student council president. "You didn't text me back." He finally said, redirecting their conversation to a much more relievent point.

Chizuru could feel his eyes on her and she still didn't glance at him. She nodded, "I know." She mumbled and there was more silence. She knew he was waiting for her to explain herself but she was talking her time. Honestly, she wasn't sure where this more brazen side of her was coming from, but it felt good to stand her ground.

"And so you didn't respond." His fingers finally fell from her shoulder and he grabbed her elbow, pulling her to a stop and turning her towards him. Her heart jumped to her throat, but where it should've been beating like crazy around him, it was only out of slight embarrassment. There were students milling about and her eyes jumped to them, their curious eyes looking at them and their steps slowing downâ€"hoping to over hear something good to gossip about. "Why?"

She sighed softly, "My dad called this morning and by the time I saw you texted me, class already started." She finally looked up at his stern gaze, but for once, didn't feel intimidated by it. Just annoyed. Why was it okay for him to do that to her? They were equals, weren't they? "You should understand that, right?"

Kazama's eyebrows slammed down over his eyes and he frowned, "What has gotten into you?" he asked, lowering his voice to that no-nonsense tone. It was stiff and hard, meant to scold. She wasn't phased by it. "Is this still about me cancelling on you? Chizuru," he tipped his head to the side and frowned again, his hands cupping her face to keep her eyes on his. "You've got to get over that. I've already explained that I can't help when they need me at the last minute and I already apologized for it...I thought you understood all that."

Chizuru tipped her head back and she closed her eyes, trying to collect herself before she answered. It wouldn't do good to yell at him in the midst of so many students. Their problems were not for them to hear and spread around. "I do understand," She pulled at his wrists, forcing him to drop his hands from her face. It was hard to speak with him doing that. His hands settled on her shoulders, which weren't much better since it seemed to weigh her down but she didn't push it. "but you need to understand that I also have a life, other priorities, and things that come up last minute for me too. You can'tâ€"no, you don't have the right to be mad at me for it. I shouldn't have to apologize to you, if you don't feel you have to do so to me."

Kazama pressed his lips together, his eyes flashing slightly and she knew what she said upset him. His eyes finally glanced around them, as if just realizing they weren't in private. "You have to understand my side, Chizuru. You may have other priorities, but mine, wellâ€"they're more important. I made reservations last night, I had to pull some strings for them to get us in and that's why I was so upset. I hate that our night together went to waste because you had to cancel." His hand went back up to cup the side of her face, his thumb slowly moving back and forth over her cheek. The touch wasn't as comforting as she normally found it to be, but she figured it was because she was mad.

There was his apology disguised as her fault. No matter how much she tried, she knew he wouldn't get it. He wouldn't admit his fault because he didn't think it was him. She forced her lips to smile, there was no use to keep trying at the moment. And maybe she was being too hard on him? She automatically leaned into his hand and his lips broke into a small smileâ€"a smile of victory, not of love. Had she always been blind to those kind of things?

"I'm sorry for not answering your text sooner," She finally told him and refusing to apologize for cancelling. If he didn't do it, then neither would she. A heavy feeling settled over her and she tried hard not to frown, but...what did that say about their relationship? Had she always been so wrong for years?

Kazama leaned forward and kissed her forehead, "That's alright." He whispered, "I promise to let you continue with your other priorities without fuss. After all, that's what college is for. I'm sure your father would like you involved in things."

Chizuru gave a solid nod while everything inside her was screaming to correct him. It wasn't for her father, it was for herself. He lowered his hand and took hers in his, taking her to her next class. Kazama wasn't as tense as he was earlier and she noted that, as much as she was mad at him, he did seem to get himself worked up when she was upset with him. That was something, right? She tried to convince herself of that.

"Are you busy this weekend?" she asked, trying to make conversation with him and hoping that he wouldn't be around to accidentally see her at the party.

His face scrunched up with distaste and she furrowed her brow, "Unfortunately." He mumbled and he shook his head, giving her a small smile. "The Frat next door is hosting their annual Mixer, we have to be vigilant and keep an eye on them. I'm surprised the Administration continues to let this happen, but I'm determined to put a stop to this. It's a blemish to this school. If we'd only eradicate these sort of things and hosted more elegant get-togethers, we could sky-rocket into Top 3 rather than be stuck in Top 5."

Chizuru nodded slowly, her heart sinking. How was she going to get to the party without being noticed by him. "So you're going to be at the party?" she asked, staring down at her feet.

Kazama gave an irritated sigh. "Chizuru, please pay attention." He glanced at her, "I wouldn't be caught dead at that party. I can't be seen there, it would ruin everything I've built for myself here. In actuality, I'm going out of town, but my comrades have been informed to keep an eye on the whole thing and report it whenâ€"and it willâ€"get out of hand. They get three strikes before Administration has to do something about them. This year, I will crack them."

They stopped again, this time right outside her classroom. She glanced up at him, slightly wary that he'd see the horror in her eyes at the thought. If he did get what he wanted, that would get her new friends in serious trouble. Expulsion. Kazama brushed her hair from her face, not at all catching her expression. He kissed her briefly and gave her a pleased look.

"We'll do something maybe Sunday night, ok?" he smiled, completely peaceful as if he didn't just tell her that he planned on ruining the life's of an entire Fraternity. "Remember to keep your distance from that Okita character. I don't trust him for one minute."

Chizuru only nodded, feeling numb. She watched as he turned away from her and she stared at him. How long had she been blind to how he really was inside and out? She finally walked into her classroom, but wasn't really paying attention. Her thoughts kept buzzing to what he had told her.

They get three strikes before Administration has to do something about them. This year, I \*\*will\*\* crack them.

They get three strikes before Administration has to do something about them. This year, I \*\*will\*\* crack them.

They get three strikes before Administration has to do something



about them. This year... \_

\_\*\*I. \*\*\_

\_\*\*Will. \*\*\_

\_\*\*Crack. \*\*\_

\_\*\*them.\*\*\_

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><p><strong>an: Thank you for reading! :) Read and review, pleeease!  
I appreciate it, always do! Til next time! \*\*

## 8. P-A-R-T-Y

\_OkitaXChizuru Romance.\_

\_\*\*a/n: :) Update. Enjoy! \*\*\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Crazy<strong>

\*\*Chapter 8: P-A-R-T-Y\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Chizuru wasn't sure what to think anymore. She held her phone tightly in her hands and resisted the urge to text Okita. On some level, he had to know what Kazama was planning. From what he was saying to her, he had tried to do this multiple times...but he seemed to be <em>very<em> sure this time around. Why? She wasn't so sure she wanted to know the reason.

She told herself that once she saw Okita next, or any of the guys, she'd warn them anyways. What Kazama was doing wasn't fair...at least, that's what she tried to tell herself. He had no right to try and get them in serious trouble because he felt that what they were doing was wrong. Her thoughts immediately bounced to the Underground and Okita's involvement with itâ€”the Fraternity's involvement.

Now she realized why the guys were so nervous about her knowing. Kazama would have a field day with that sort of information. It would be just the thing he'd need to take them down permanently. She frowned, she had no clue how much responsibility she suddenly had. And how much faith Okita had in her.

Chizuru tried hard not to think about it, but it was all that buzzed in her head. The day went by surprisingly fast because of it, but that only added to her thinking about it. She hadn't seen Kazama after that, he texted her a little around noon, but other than that it was like normal. Honestly, she was feeling a little paranoid about it. Like he knew of her involvement with them and would somehow get the evidence he needed to take them down through her. That would be the worst.

But he didn't know and she wouldn't ever tell him. It wasn't her

secret to tell.

In an attempt to get her thoughts on a different track, she tried to read one of the few books she had due, but it was a failed attempt. She made it through homework decently fine, but it was a daunting task. The door to her dorm opened and she glanced up at a wide smiled Sen. Recently, her extra curricular activities had held her up after her classes, so seeing her while it was still daylight out was a rarity.

Before Chizuru could even greet her friend, Sen came flying towards her, jumping on her bed and knocking over her text book in the process. She didn't even look remorseful, her eyes bright and her energy palpable.

"Well, uhâ€"hello to you too!" she greeted, laughing lightly.

Sen's grin got wider and she bounced on her knees on the bed. "Chizuru, oh my god, Chizuru!" She held her cellphone in her hands and shoved it in her face. "\_We\_ are invited to the elite and very privileged Fraternity and Sorority Annual Mixer!" She squealed and continued to bounce, making it hard to read the Facebook E-vite that was on her phone.

"Really...?" she noticed the message was from Okita himself and Sen's reply was '\_We are SO there! ;)\_'. She didn't like the winky face she put after that, but she knew that was part of Sen's charm. A part of her was smiling because it seemed that Okita wanted to secure the fact that she agreed to go and the other part wanted to shake him. He was relentless.

Sen fell back onto her bed, arms spread wide. "Can you believe it?!" She turned her head towards Chizuru, the smile plastered to her face. "Freshman don't just get this sort of thing! This is like, a social miracle, Chizuru! This is \_EPIC\_! We're not even pledges! We're \_guests\_!" She kicked her feet up and down, letting out a small squeal of joy.

"It sounds like it'll be fun," she agreed, smiling down at her friend. She wished she could be that excited, but the only energy in her was a nervous one. One that bordered nausea. Chizuru was still fearful that she'd make a fool of herself, or of the Fraternity for inviting her. She wasn't a party girl...

Sen pushed herself to her knees again, taking her friend's hands in hers. "You're definitely going to come, right?" she asked, her big eyes wide and pleading. "You \_so\_ cannot leave me hanging!"

Chizuru smiled in response, "O-of course I won't leave you hanging..." Chizuru felt ridiculous repeating that, but kept a straight face. "I'll be there."

Sen threw her hands up and then pulled Chizuru into a huge hug, effectively squeezing the air from her lungs. "Great, because I have the most perfect outfit for you!" She paused and pulled back slightly, eyebrows furrowing slightly. "I mean, if that's okay?"

Surprisingly, Chizuru was okay with that. She definitely trusted her idea of what to wear more than her own, at least for the sort of

event they would be attending to. "Yeah, that'd actually be really great."

Sen jumped up from the bed and quickly rushed to her closet, "I'm so glad you said that," She quickly began shoving her clothing aside until she found what she was looking for. "I was actually, really hoping you'd say I could cause...well, I went shopping the other day, which I promised myself I wouldn't do this year but I really couldn't help it...and well," She pulled out a hanger with a dress hanging off of it, or rather, what Chizuru hoped was a dress.

She really could tell from across the room, because it honestly looked like whoever made it didn't even use all the fabric they had when they put it together. Not that it was unappealing, it just seemed very intricate and very...sexy. So not her. She was sure the dress was made specifically for buxom girls with long legs, not short ones or rather small chested girls.

Sen glanced down at it, a forlorn look in her eyes and smile. "I just...couldn't say no to this, but it doesn't fit me." She smiled at Chizuru sheepishly, "but I couldn't take it back and let some random face wear this beauty and I thought of you. I'd much rather you have it! Plus, It'll probably be perfect on you and your petite frame."

Chizuru blushed and shook her head, her hand picking at the bottom of the dress feeling both pleased and unsure about the whole thing. Yeah, even up close it didn't seem like it covered much. "I...I mean, I can'tâ€"

"You can and you will, Chizuru." Sen gave her a stern look, "It'll please me and don't go ragging on your soap box about your figure. You are blessed! You can pull off any look, so embrace it." She handed her the dress and Chizuru reluctantly took it.

"Thank you, Sen." She told her earnestly. Honestly, she'd be so lost when it came to these things that she was glad to have Sen as a guide. She set the dress down, her hands fingering the peach, nearly nude colored fabric. It was really ruched from the bust all the way to the hemline and pretty with the embellishment along the V of the neckline. It actually made her excited to put it on.

"No, Chizuru. Thank you," She smiled down at her, "And keep that grateful feeling until tomorrow, you're gonna need it until I'm through with you." A small gleam reflected in her large eyes and Chizuru tried hard not to appear unsettled again.

She wasn't sure what that meant, but automatically, her hands flew to her hair. Sen only laughed and that seemed to relax her. Chizuru could trust Sen with this, at least more than her own judgement. Tomorrow was definitely going to be nerve-wrecking.

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><p>Okita raised his arms high above his head, stretched pleasantly before letting them drop. The blood rushed to them gently and he flexed his hands to keep them from going momentarily numb. Only about, 7 more hours until he got to see Chizuru. 8 depending on if she arrived fashionably late.<p>

Saito finished toweling off his sweat before he gave Okita a small look of approval. "That was better." He admitted.

"Yeah, I tend to focus more when Hijikata's not jumping on my back." He rolled his neck, his muscles instantly sighing. A secret he wasn't so sure was quite a secret was that he loved his workouts with Saito. They were always so challenging and fun to him. Not to mention, he actually worked hard to keep from bruising up his handsome face. Saito never let him go easily, not even on his off days—which he did have every now and then.

"Obviously." Saito took a swig of his water before he glanced at him again. "Regular time tomorrow."

Okita frowned, his eyebrows pinching. "Regular time \_tomorrow\_?" he echoed skeptically, "\_After\_ a mixer? Are you insane?"

Saito gave him a wan smile, "I didn't think that'd be a problem with Chizuru in attendance." He tipped his head to the side slightly, eyes hard to read. "You're usually on your best behavior, am I wrong?"

Okita pursed his lips, but then smirked at his observant friend. "You see way too much. Fine." He shrugged, "But it's you who will have to deal with my hung over grumpy ass."

Saito shook his head, "You say that as if it'll be new."

Okita laughed and waved his friend away. "Didn't Sano say he needed your help today or something...?" Saito only gave him a nod, giving him yet another reminder that his next match was within a couple of days, before he left him alone.

He waited until he knew for sure that Saito was gone before he pulled out his phone and, rather obsessively and annoyingly, checked through his phone. He had fought the urge to constantly take a break to check his phone, or his social media page for any messages from Chizuru or her wacky friend—both which were zilch.

Okita sighed and shoved his phone back into his dufflebag before wiping the rest of his sweat off his face. He had to be patient. Despite the fact in order to ensure her presence at the party he extended the invite out to her friend...who was more than obliged to attend, but he was still...\_anxious\_ for the time to arrive.

Although he wanted to be a hundred percent confident in her, he wouldn't be surprised if her friend arrived stag—\_alone\_. He grimaced slightly, hoping that when he extended the invite out to her, that she didn't get the wrong message, or that Chizuru didn't either. Okita slung his dufflebag over his shoulder and headed out, he had to check with the guys and make sure that they had all they needed for the night.

But really, he was hoping they had it all covered. He really had no room in his head to think about anything but Chizuru and if she would come. He couldn't help it, the thought was like a plague—\_all consuming and lethal\_. He was tempted to text her and remind her, but felt that screamed needy which was definitely \_not\_ him.

Nothing he was feeling was like him. Maybe he\_ did\_ need something to keep his mind off of it or attempt to do something. The Frat house was, surprisingly, quiet and relatively empty. He narrowed his eyes and listened for a few seconds before realizing that relatively meant completely this time. He had the house to himself, again, surprisingly.

They only had about six or seven hours to go until the party started, but the house wasn't cleaned yet, nor decorated, nor anything. He grimaced again, glad he wasn't stuck on clean up duty now and the day after. That was going to be a huge mess, one that made him glad he was no longer a pledge. Okita moved to his room, tossing his duffle bag towards the corner before he stripped of his sweaty clothes, grabbed a clean stark white towel and moved down the hall to the bathroom.

It was a rare, but very welcomed, chance to actually be able to walk about in the buff. Sure, as a Fraternity of guys, walking around in the buff wouldn't be any big deal...but Okita had endured his fair share of group male nudity during High School after gym class and he did\_ not\_ want to relive it. Now, if he lived in a house full of females"well, he had no problem with \_that\_.

Okita failed to smirk at his own train of thoughts, not as amused as he once would've been with the idea.

The shower was, upsettingly, lukewarm. The water quickly turning ice cold within seconds, but he dealt with it. In many ways, the cold shower was refreshing and jolted his body from his sluggish aftermath of his workout. He hated to admit it, but he needed to get out of his funk. His 'can't stop thinking about Chizuru' funk.

He wished he could, really, but once he stepped out, dried himself off and put on clean clothes, his resolve was gone. Instead of calling his fellow brothers to see if they needed help, he just rolled on top of his bed and closed his eyes. The hours slipping away from him, his cellphone tight in his hand.

\* \* \*

><p>A sharp pain finally stirred Okita, making him throw a groggy right hook at whatever was currently hitting him.<p>

"Whoa, shit!"

Okita rolled over and cracked an eye open, immediately spotting Heisuke standing over him, holding his hands up in surrender. He glared up at him, the most vulgar of curse words on the tip of his tongue but Heisuke spoke first.

"Don't fucking shoot the messenger, dude!" he yelled, putting even more space between them. He wouldn't put it past Okita to try and kick him. He barely missed the punch, had he not been warned or even aware of Okita's nasty waking up habit, he would've been hurting for sure. "The guys told me to get you off your ass. It's time."

As if on cue, loud thrumming and bass beats started vibrating the walls and, he was sure, the entire house. Okita rolled over onto his stomach and caught sight of his alarm clock, blaring white blocked numbers stared back at him.

6:58

He groaned softly, pushed himself up and tried to casually look at his phoneâ€”nothing. He resisted the urge to throw his phone at the wall, or worse, text her and instead shot another glare at Heisuke. He rolled his eyes and shrugged.

"No one's arrived yet," he told him, "but we got just about everything else in place. The Sorority will be here any minute, we didn't think you'd appreciate it if you were still in bed..."

Okita nodded, muttered a pitiful thanks under his breath before he got up and started to go through his closet. Heisuke reminded him not to take too long then scurried away before Okita could throw something at him. But really, he was grateful to him for the wake up call, no matter how annoying. Obsessive Sorority girls were the worst and cunning. He wouldn't put it past a few of his 'fans' to try and \_wake \_him up, unprepared.

The thought made him grimace and he quickly dressed, running a hand through his hair and popped a mint before he went downstairs. The music was already at full blast, practically enveloping him in a warm embrace that promised a good night. The tunes were a pleasant mix of 'dance-if-you-must' or 'mingle-with-a-drink'â€”which was perfect. Shinpachi, for all that he was a goofball, made a pretty mean playlist.

As he walked into the kitchen, he was greeted by the whole Fraternity, all waiting for him in order to start the night out with their traditional shots. He tried hard not to appear disgruntled, still, and instead gave them all a nod. He hoped they would all assume he was still grumpy from being woken upâ€”which was half true.

"About time you showed up," Shinpachi shoved a shot glass full of amber liquid towards him, surprisingly not a drop spilled. "You think that with sleeping away the whole day you'd be up and at 'em by now." His cheeks already held a slight reddish color to them, and Okita wondered if he had already pre-gamed\_ before\_ the first shot.

Sanosuke shook his head and dragged their attention, "Pardon our friend, he's slightly miffed about doing \_'all the work.'\_" He finished his sentence with air quotes, making Heisuke choke down a chuckle.

Shinpachi rolled his eyes, "Whatever, he's here \_now\_! Let's get to it!" He was practically bouncing in place, obviously beyond ready for the party to kick off. He was like an overly excited toddler ready to head to the park or eat some candy.

Heisuke grinned and was the first to raise his shot glass, also seemingly skilled at not managing to drop a single drop of liquid. "Here's to what's surely going to be an epic night of greatness!" The guys around them hollered in agreement, Shinpachi the loudest.

Okita could help but feel the earlier gloom waver a bit as he raised his arm along with the others. \_This is who you are. Part of the Fraternity. Lean, mean, partying-machine! \_He thought, his eyes

dipping around to his friends. \_So what if she doesn't show? You can still have a great time. You will have a great time, regardless! Show some pretty girl a good time, drink to have a good time. You got this. You've always done this. This is familiar! \_He encouraged himself.

Almost in perfect sync, they each pulled their hands from the group, pressed the glass to their lips and threw back the drink in one easy motion. The sting of the alcohol felt good as it burned it's way down Okita's throat, kicking his senses into alert and warming up his body instantly. Bourbon. His favorite.

He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and shoved his empty shot towards Heisuke, "Another." He ordered rather than asked. Okita knew that if he were to keep his steady and cool thoughts in order, he needed to keep the drinks steady as well.

Heisuke rolled his eyes, "Not your fucking servant," he mumbled under his breath, but poured him another and filled his own as well. They briefly clinked their glasses before they repeated the quick flick of the wrist motion of taking the shot. The shot went down easier and smoother than the first one and Okita sighed as he slammed his shot glass face down on the table.

Heisuke scrunched his face and coughed a few times, but managed to slam his own shot glass down. "God damn, that's awful..." he wiped at the slight dribble on his chin with his shirt and grimaced.

"You're still a boy yet," Okita grinned and nudged him, "Once your balls drop and you become a man, you'll enjoy the taste of Bourbon."

Heisuke scowled and motioned to Sanosuke for a beer, "Ha ha." He leaned on the table, "You're so fucking funny...douche."

Sanosuke chuckled and passed them both a bottle of beer, "Just stick to beer," he told him, "That way you don't look like a complete idiot around the girls."

"Ha ha ha." Heisuke took a long swig of his drink and flipped them off with his free hand before he turned away. By now, the front door was open and people were starting to file in and start to crowd the kitchen. Okita watched as lithe Sorority girls sashayed in, blinked wide eyes up at an even redder faced Shinpachi before they giggled away with beers in their hands.

Okita rolled his eyes and pushed up from his spot, each girl that came in after the previous was getting more and more bold when it came to looking at him. And, annoyingly, none made him even the least bit interested. He tossed his already empty bottle in the trash and grabbed another. That warm floating feeling was disappearing already, he needed to fix that.

"Slow down," Sanosuke called out to him as he popped the cap to a few beers and set them on the table. "Why don't you go walk around and wait? She'll show up soon."

Okita shot a glare in his direction, "I have no idea what you're talking about," he shrugged and took a sip of his beer. The taste not as enriching as the earlier shots. But he wasn't quite ready to take

another, he needed to pace himselfâ€”keep the warmth at bay, otherwise he'd crash much too soon. Not even five minutes into the party and already smashed...? That wasn't him.

He wasn't about to let the others know just how nervous and anxious he was over Chizuru and if she'd show up. Plus, if she did, he didn't want to be drunk and say...things he shouldn't. He didn't trust himself when he was drunk. He was a wild card of sorts without adding alcohol to the mix.

Okita wandered into the dining room, the hallways already getting congested with bodies from surrounding Fraternities and Sororities. He could hear Shinpachi and some others shouting from one room, noticed Heisuke bounce around doing fuck knows what towards the back and he noticed Saito taking note by the open door.

Not even ten minutes in and the party was already alive. But, what to do...? He scolded himself, he never use to have that sort of problem.

\_Hurry up, Chizuru.\_

\* \* \*

><p>Chizuru smoothed her hands over the dress and watched as her reflection winced when her fingers instantly met her smooth thighs. She turned slightly in the mirror and tugged at the back end of the dress, only to have it ride right back up.<p>

She frowned, instantly creating a crease in her forehead. This was beyond anything she'd ever fantasied about wearing, but Sen had been correctâ€”she pulled it off. Her eyes landed to the only pair of heels she had, wedges she hadn't worn since graduation. They were barely even a heel, not like the pair Sen had waiting for her.

The heel looked like it would snap under any weight and looked they would be impossible to walk with. They were very pretty though, for shoes. Chizuru looked at her own pair, they certainly matched very well with the dress and Sen had offered her a pair of her ownâ€”but Chizuru refused. Not because she didn't \_want\_ to, but, she felt that she had to wear something of hers for the night.

Everything from the dress, to her makeup, perfume, and even to the curlers placed in her hair were 'borrowed' from Sen. The least she could do was wear her \_own\_ heels. Besides, paired with her dress it makes it look more...\_her\_. Not to mention she knew she could at least walk in her own heels, meaning she'd make less of a fool of herself.

Her eyes landed on the clock and she pressed her glossed lips together. Already, they were 20 minutes late to the party. They had started getting ready two hours ago and they were yet to finish. Chizuru was never one to dawdle when getting ready, but she had never actually got ready like Sen did before. Had she known what it all entailed, she would've started earlier, but instead she finished her homework, dodged a phone call from Kazama and send him a text instead, and called her father to catch up.

Once she told Sen she was ready, it was like she released the beast of beauty preparations. During their stay together, however short,



she'd never seen Sen so focused and, well, ruthless. She watched as her eyes light up with what she could only describe as glee mixed with mischief. Sen bounced up from her spot on her bed and rushed her, hands instantly in her hair.

"Great, I've been waiting for the moment to get my hands on your hair!" She squealed and smiled brightly, "Wait 'til you see what I've got in store for you!"

Chizuru was, more or less, scared but she trusted her. After she combed and fussed with her hair, she pulled sections of it into huge curlers and then ordered her to showerâ€”with a shower cap so she didn't mess with her hair. Embarrassingly, she told her to shave 'everything important' and to lather repeatedly.

When she had finished, Sen instructed her to lotion repeatedly, spritz perfume a few times and she double checked the curlers in her hair. After that ordeal, she specifically told her to pick matching underwear (as if Chizuru didn't already do so) and go with a strapless bra. Well, if she were honest, Sen had said no bra since the dress had built in cupsâ€”but she had adamantly been against that.

After she donned that, she pulled on a bathrobeâ€”not quite comfortable enough to prance around in her matching undies in front of Sen yet (or ever, really) and was ordered to sit in her chair. Next, Sen pulled out her make up kits, and there were multiple ones for what seemed like every occasion, before she started to prep her face for the night.

The whole process seemed to drone on and it was borderline torture. Not that Chizuru was familiar with torture, but she had a faint idea. Sen plucked and tweezed her eyebrows even though they were 'perfect' as they were, just for a 'finishing touch' sort of look.

Then she dabbed away with a dash of blush here, a touch of eye shadow there, mascara coated her eyelashes so thickly that they actually felt heavy when she blinked and she applied a deep colored lip gloss that accented her dress. In the end, Chizuru's reflection looked nothing like herself and way better than she could've ever hoped for.

Sen's departing comment before she started fixing herself up was, "Gorgeous."

Now, Chizuru waited for Sen's okay to take the curlers out of her hair. She turned back towards the mirror and tilted her head slightly. Now, she looked like a college girlâ€”albeit, with curlers, but nonetheless, mature. Like her age rather than some freshman at High school.

Sen opened the door and paused, her hair in a towel and a bathrobe on. "Exactly how I pictured," She smiled at Chizuru, "I knew that dress was a good choice!"

She gave her a quick wink and Chizuru gave her her best smile. "Uhâ€”um..." Sen paused in her steps and glanced at her, her hands on her dresser drawer. Chizuru wasn't sure if it was all her time spent around Okita or if she was really just getting to be more courageous around her friends, but she couldn't keep her thoughts to herself.

"Not that I'm not at all pleased with your help and this beautiful dress butâ€"um, isn't it a little short...?"

Sen tilted her head in thought, her eyes concentrated on the hem and she stepped forward as her fingers plucked at it slightly. Chizuru blushed in embarrassment and took in involuntary step back which earned her a light giggle from Sen.

"Honestly?" She smiled and shook her head, "I think it could be \_shorter\_...it actually was when I put it on, but I'm just slightly taller than you. On you, it actually fits the way it should..." Sen nodded and stepped back towards her dresser, "Trust me, you'll see Sorority girls wear shorterâ€"if possible. You'll be tame! Plus, you look hot, even \_with \_the curlers!"

Chizuru tried hard not to show just how pleased her comment made her so she turned towards the mirror again. Now that she said that, it did relieve her somewhat, so long as she wasn't the only one and everyone just stared at her. She really only wanted attention from \_one\_ individual and she hoped he would like it as much as Sen did.

"You really think so...?" she asked, pressing her lips together and mentally scolding herself for sounding unconfident. But she couldn't help it.

Sen's face scrunched, "Uh,\_ yeah\_! Of course I do!" She gave her a knowing look, "I'm one hundred percent positive that you'll get the\_ right\_ attention." She winked again.

Chizuru froze, her hands paused over the ruching and she looked at her in the mirror. She didn't risk turning to look at her, afraid of what she meant and what she would see. But Sen wasn't even looking at her anymore. She let out a small sigh, but it didn't relieve her sudden tension. What did she mean by that comment?

Just calm down, She thought nervously and she focused on her image again. This was the most time she'd ever spent in the mirror...ever. It only took Sen about another ten minutes, blow dryer and everything, before she stood next to her all ready as she slipped her heels on. With a flick of the wrist, she gestured for Chizuru to sit in the chair so she could get to the curlers.

It took less than a minute to get them all out and for her to brush and hairspray them in place. Sen tugged at a few places, spritz, then moved to another section. Finally, she pulled away and smiled down at her. "All done!" she told her.

Sen's lips were fully colored and glossed now and made her white teeth pop in a dazzling smile. It brought negative thoughts about how Sen had mentioned how she thought Okita was hot. Would he think that about her tonight...?

Her stomach tightened in response, so she pushed herself to her feet. She squeezed her eyes quickly before she placed herself in front of the mirrorâ€"and practically gasped at her reflection. There was no way, that the girlâ€"womanâ€"looking back at her, was \_her\_.

No, this woman had curves, the kind that most would kill for and the kind Chizuru never knew she actually \_had\_. Sen had done a marvelous

job at making sure her make up didn't hide her face, but rather complimented it. Usually, Chizuru only ever put on eyeliner or mascara, just barely too but now...well, she wasn't sure if she should leave without a little bit more ever again. Her eyes sparkled, seemed bigger and seemed to pop. And her lips, oh goodness, her lips looked plump and\_ kissable\_!

It was so amazing to see the whole thing come together. Her hair was voluminous, feathered bangs, and springy but tamed curls that shortened her hair by a couple inches and framed her face in a mature way accented her party dress. The dress color against her skin actually made her seem tanner than she really was, not at all pale like she thought it would. It really was the\_ perfect\_ dress for her.

"Oh, Sen..." she whispered in awe, the mirror mimicking her. She felt tears prick her eyes and she fanned her eyes to keep them at bay. "Thank you. Thank you so much!"

Sen walked up to her and tipped her head to the side in a confused way. Her features pinched slightly, "Thanks for what?" she asked innocently, "You've always been beautiful, girl!" She quickly wrapped an arm around her shoulders and brought her face close to hers as she pulled up her phone. "Now smile!" It was hard for Chizuru not to smile, she was still in awe of her makeover.

Any negative thoughts she had earlier were completely squashed, because for the first time in a long time, she felt \_confident \_in her beauty.

\* \* \*

><p>It was brisk outside. Sen hunkered down in her coat and shivered in her miniskirt, but she didn't quicken her pace like Chizuru wanted them too. She wasn't sure she'd stay on her feet, but it was a risk she was willing to take! She shivered and pulled at her own coat.<p>

Sen smiled at her over her shoulder, "The price of beauty," She joked and Chizuru found herself giggling. Yeah, the chill was a bit much but not even that could contain her giddiness. Sen looped her arm through Chizuru's and nodded at the Frat house. "Oh my gosh, we're almost there!"

Even from the distance, Chizuru could easily hear the music thumping and see people milling all about the area. They passed the Student Council house and Chizuru shrunk down, putting off that she was cold. It worked, Sen didn't even notice her actions and instead pulled her closer. "I can't believe we're going to a Fraternity party!" She squealed and stopped her, her face turning serious for a moment. "If we get separated, find someoneâ€"probably me, or \_whatever \_it is make sure we don't leave without letting the other know first. Ok?"

Chizuru nodded, "Okay." She liked that Sen said that, it said a lot about her and made her feel at ease. With a satisfied nod, Sen led them towards the house. Chizuru didn't realize just how nervous she was for this moment until she felt Sen give her arm a quick squeeze. She shot Chizuru a reassuring smile and Chizuru attempted to relax her body.

\_You look good, you are good.\_ She thought to herself as she took a few breathes. There were people packed on the front porch and lawn of the Frat house, all had red Solo cups in their hands, a few swayed to the music that thundered inside, but most were smoking.

Chizuru resisted the urge to wave the smoke from her face, her nose scrunching with the smell. It once again surprised her how she liked the smell coming off of Okita, but\_ not\_ when it came to anyone else. As they walked up the porch steps, she looked over everyone they passed, curious to see if Okita was perhaps outside having a cigarette breakâ€”something she knew most likely would do, especially if he was waiting for her.

She felt herself wince at the idea. They were 'fashionably late' as Sen had mentioned, more than once. She really hoped that if he were among the smoking group outside, he hadn't been waiting outside the entire time. Luckily, she didn't see him outside among the faces of those unfamiliar. She did, however, notice how when they passed by a pair or two, they would pause and stare at them.

Chizuru felt her cheeks start to redden and she kept her eyes forward. Sen paused again, smiling at someone over her shoulder and she pulled away from Chizuru. "I just saw someone I need to say hi to." She nudged her and shot her a playful wink. "I'll meet you inside?"

Before she could answer her, Sen practically skipped around her and towards whomever she saw on the porch. Chizuru glanced, hoping that it wasn't who she was looking for, and sighed in relief when she noticed some random guy greet her. Now she was back to trying to find Okita, she pulled out her phone but then thought better of it. She'd find him, the house couldn't possibly be \_that\_ big.

When she walked in, the scent of food, smoke, and something else greeted her, despite the open door venting the house. The music was twice as loud as it had been outside, and the place was lite up with multiple colored stringed lights. They added that party atmosphere without being childish or high school.

She couldn't help but smile. It was better than she imagined a College party would be, even if she could feel the music rather than hear it. As she walked further in, she first noticed the dark haired Saito standing by an open closet hung with coats. She smiled as she approached him, already taking off her coat.

"Saito!" she greeted with a smile and he seemed to hesitate when he turned towards her. His eyes took her in, but he didn't seem to recognize her right away. Chizuru felt slightly embarrassed that she called out to him when his eyes finally made the connection. He blinked and then gave her a soft smile. Under the dimmed house lights and uplighting of multiple colored lights, his features seemed almost softer, not as stoic or stern as usual.

"Evening, Chizuru." He greeted back, holding his hand out to take her coat. "You lookâ€”"

"Have you seen Okita?" she asked, blushing when she realized she cut him off. He blinked at her again and she pursed her lips. "I'm sorry, you were saying...?"

Saito hung up her coat and only gave her a smile. "It was nothing." He then gestured to the house, "Okita is somewhere around here."

Chizuru felt bad for not having let him talk, but she didn't press it. Instead, she gave her a smile and touched his shoulder. "Okay, thanks Saito!" With that, she walked further into the house, her eyes open and searching.

The closest room to her was one that lead into the kitchen, which, just like everywhere else was packed. Even in heels, she could barely see everyone who was crowded about in the kitchen. There were yelling and chanting around a table, and Chizuru noticed that Sen was right. All the girls she could see were wearing dresses like hers, but if possible, even shorter than hers that showed much more skin too.

Chizuru was just about to leave and try another room, when she heard someone call her name from way back. "Chiiiiizuuuurrruuuu!" She practically snapped her head in the direction the yelling voice was coming from. The crowd around the table seemed to open up and she saw that Shinpachi and Sanosuke were at the other end, both waving her over.

Now that they spotted her, she couldn't quite ignore them and maybe they knew where Okita was? She shuffled past the group, once again, causing eyes to follow her as she got closer to them. Sanosuke glared at the guys by her, "Oi, let her through douches, she's with \_us\_!" He then pointed at one of them, eyes narrowing again. "And \_stop\_ staring at her like that, like I said. She's one of \_us\_!"

Chizuru smiled gratefully at them as she reached them, "Hey guys!" she greeted, her eyes automatically searching for deep emerald eyes. Nothing.

Shinpachi draped an arm around her and leaned most of his weight on her small frame. She gasped and practically had to wrap both of her arms around him to keep him on his feet. His face was bright pink in the cheeks and he could barely keep his eyes open as he smiled down at her.

"Chiz-u" He hiccuped, "You are b-e-autifuâ€"l!" Chizuru could hardly understand him and she knew he was beyond drunk. Sanosuke shook his head and managed to successfully pull Shinpachi off of her.

"Don't mind him," he told Chizuru and Shinpachi pushed off him and grabbed his bottle of beer off the table, but not before whooping loudly and throwing both his hands in the air. The crowd around them joined in and she laughed. The energy was infectious. Sanosuke gestured to his beer bottle, "Thirsty?" he asked.

Chizuru pressed her lips together and shook her head, "No, thank you." She wasn't sure if she wanted to drink quite yet. She'd never had any before and although she was tempted, she still had other things to do first.

Shinpachi turned towards her, his eyes wide in a very comical way. "Nuh way, Chizu-ru!" he slurred, "You have to \_haf\_ sumthin'!"

She tipped her head and indulged him, "Alright, do you have punch?" she asked, hoping that if she drank juice of some sort that would appease him.

"We donâ€" "

Shinpachi raised his beer bottle and shouted over Sanosuke's voice, "I'll geâ€"et it for youh!" he hiccuped and quickly pushed past Sanosuke who only shook his head before taking a sip of his own beer.

Chizuru smiled and leaned against the counter. The group around the table were playing some sort of game she'd never seen before, one that involved solo cups in a line in two separate rows on opposite ends of the table. A relay race of sorts where one side tried to out drink the other side faster and then flip the empty cup upside down.

It was interesting and apparently involved a lot of yelling. She turned her attention back to Sanosuke who was silently watching both her and the group. He didn't seem too far gone, but there was a slight pinkish glow to his face as well.

"Have you seen Okita?" she asked.

Sanosuke took another drink of his beer and nodded, "He should be in the living room area. Just follow where the music gets louder." He gave her a smile, "Trust me, he's probably looking for you too."

Chizuru tried to keep her face from showing just how happy that made her, so instead she smiled like she normally would. "Okay, thank you!" She was just about to walk away when Shinpachi shuffled his way back to her. He nearly tripped and spilled the entire solo cup he filled with her punch. She quickly stepped forward and took it, red punch dripping over the rim and a little on her hand.

"Enjoy!" he smirked at her and winked. "You know where to get more."

She nodded and took a tiny sip. It was very fruity, delicious, and a little...odd. She couldn't place what was odd about it, but she shrugged it off. Taking a deeper drink to avoid spilling more. After that, she managed to squeeze around the group and back into the hallway. It was taking her a lot longer to find him than she hoped, but hopefully, Sanosuke was right.

Chizuru did as he instructed and followed the music into the living room where all the couches were pushed against the walls, as were the side and coffee tables to make a clearing for a makeshift dance floor. Which, judging by the girls and guys dancing, they were using it well. The room was darker than all the other room, but had twice as much stringed lights.

Absentmindedly, she took a few more sips of her punch. The more she drank, the more she tasted how odd it was. It was still very good though. Her eyes searched harder in this room and finally spotted him leaning against the other wall, a solo cup in his hand as he chatted casually to some Sorority girls. She stopped and stared, debating on walking over and interruptingâ€"especially if he didn't want to be

interrupted.

She was just about to leave the living room when he looked up and spotted her. Almost instantly, his features brightened considerably and he didn't even bother to say anything to the girls before he pushed away from the wall and made his way to her.

Chizuru could feel her heart start pounding heatedly and she took a longer drink to try and give her something to do other than simply stare at him. His eyes, even from their distance, seemed to eat her up on the spot. They traveled over her slowly, aching so, from head to toe. His emerald eyes lingered over a few spots and it was like he was physically touching her.

When he finally came up to her, his posture was normal and his walk was steady—his eyes seemed to scorch her though, with far more intensity than ever before and she sure she liked being looked at like that by him. She could feel her chest start to rise and fall heavily, it seemed like she couldn't get air in her lungs fast enough.

Okita tilted his head slightly as he stared down at Chizuru, her face flushed slightly but not nearly as rosy as his were. Despite that, he didn't look nearly as smashed as the others in the house obviously were.

His eyes skipped over her briefly before settling back down to hers. "You're late." He told her simply, that smirk tugging the corner of his lips.

Chizuru gave him a small frown that almost instantly morphed back into a smile. He reached out and tugged at her curl, his finger winding her hair around it before he let it spring back. "Sorry." She mumbled and he shrugged. "Fashionably late."

Okita chuckled, "I almost thought you wouldn't come..." he took a sip of his drink and glanced around, but it was hardly for long, his eyes almost immediately settled back to her. "Figured you changed your mind."

"No, I wouldn't do that after I said I'd be here." She gave him a sly look, "And especially after you invited my friend who would never let me sit at our dorm alone on a Saturday night."

He gave her a coy smile, "I have no idea what you mean..." he answered innocently and she rolled her eyes.

"Yes you do." She took another sip and shifted her weight. Because of the volume of the music, she had to shout just about everything and vice versa. She didn't realize just how close they had gotten so they didn't have to yell at each other. She found that Okita continually leaned down towards her to both listen and speak. He was still way taller than her despite the heels and she found that she liked that.

"I like your hair like this," he finally told her, his finger going back up and wrapping around another curl. What was it with him and her hair? She only smiled and his finger pulled gently on it before he let it drop to the halter part of the dress that was embellished with crystals. "I also like this dress." He practically whispered.

"You just look beautiful tonight."

Chizuru blushed deeply and ducked her head, "Thank you." He had no clue what that compliment did to her and her insides. They stood silently next to each other, shifting from staring at each other to everything else but each other. It was hard to act like herself when there were so many others around. Not only that, but she was starting to get light headed. She took another swift drink and Okita did the same.

"So, your student council boy-toy didn't want to attend?" She knew he was only joking, but his smile was off. And she noticed that when he spoke, his words seemed forced and by the slight pinch between his eyes she figured it was because he was trying hard not to slur. At least that's what she told herself.

The thought made her smile, he was trying hard not to appear too far gone. But why? Did he care about what she thought of him? The thought gave her both a delightful shiver and anxious feeling.

"He doesn't come to these..." Chizuru answered simply, trying hard not to smile. Instead, she shrugged but even as she said it, she wondered why she had decided to show up. Without telling him, especially knowing what his plans were with Okita's Fraternity. Did she really want to be stuck in the middle of that?

Deep down, she knew it was a no brainer. She let herself be talked into going because Okita had invited her himself. She would would just about any excuse to be around him, admittedly. His eyebrow quirked up, as if wondering the same question too, but didn't want to ask. Instead, he shrugged as well, nonchalant but a little too quick to appear so.

"I know. Better off," he leaned back and smirked, "Wouldn't want a narc here anyway...we're a bunch of rule breakers, you know."

Chizuru pursed her lips, it was automatic for her to defend Kazama and to feel offended for him but she knew he didn't mean it. Okita was tipsy if not more so, and he was blatant about the things he said—"even sober, which only made her think about the person Kazama was without her. It also worried her that she didn't feel the urge to defend him other than pure obligation...where was her passion for him? Her love? Here she was making excuses for Okita rather than the other way around. Slowly she put down her red cup and gave him a small smile—"fighting the urge to frown and the surging disappointment.

Why was she ruining her own night with questions like that? She had spent hours letting Sen prep her and make her pretty for this party, spent a few minutes searching for Okita to talk to him and now she was having doubts about it? All because of a comment that was suppose to be light hearted? She was suppose to be having fun and enjoying her time with Okita and Sen...

"Um, I should go probably find Sen..." she finally mumbled.

Chizuru needed a few minutes to clear her head from her probing and ill-timed thoughts. She also knew she had to back away from him now before she allowed herself to fall even deeper down the rabbit hole.



Her head was already buzzing like crazy without having her feelings thrown into the mix. Maybe she could still call Kazama? See if he was still in town and wanted to get dinner or something to drag her mind to her boyfriend rather than her friend she was currently and secretly obsessing over.

Slight panic lit up his eyes briefly before they turned to that usual typical expression of playfulness. "Whoa, whoa!" His steady tone gave away to a slight slur, his hand reached over and grabbed her arm before she could successfully turn away from him. His long fingers wrapped around her elbow easily and they seemed to sear right through her skin. Chizuru knew what she should've done, but instead she let him pull her back.

This is bad. This is bad. She kept chanting while her heart was soaring higher and higher. You should leave...tell him you're leaving! Her conscious was yelling, trying hard to be strong over the sound of her heart.

And really, she was going to leave, even if just to collect her thoughts. She was going to tell Okita that it wasn't his comment at all, but when she finally turned towards him and looked at him her resolve sank quicker than the Titanic did after it hit the ice berg. His dark green eyes were slightly wide and...vulnerable. The dread in them had Chizuru reeling and her palms sweating, did he really think he offended her? She frowned slightly and his eyes shifted down to their feet.

"I didn't mean to...I mean..." He scoffed and let go of her to run his fingers through his hair. His brown locks swished easily back into place, like they hadn't just been touched. "Sorry." he finally mumbled, squeezing his eyes shut.

Yeah, he was definitely more drunk then he let on, especially if he was apologizing. In the short while that she knew him, she had never seen him be remorseful or apologetic. He was a hardened guy with an ego to boost. Chizuru immediately felt guilty for being the cause of such remorse from such a strong man. She smiled at him reassuringly, her hand reached up and touched his arm.

His head snapped back to her and his eyes had that hazy quality that most of the other partiers had. She had been too busy noticing his smolder that she didn't seem to catch the haze in them before. They weren't quite as bad as Shinpachi, but still. "It's okay," She whispered, tilting her head slightly so she could appear in his line of vision. "You don't need to apologize, you didn't offend me."

Okita seemed a little confused and he shook his head, setting his half full cup down next to hers before he ducked his head closer to Chizuru. She startled but didn't move as his fingers gently lifted to touch her face. His long fingers were calloused against her soft skin and she sighed softlyâ€"barely. Her breath was caught in her throat and her mind was a muddled mess, her heart above all, was thundering loudly in her ears she was surprised she could still hear the music.

Okita opened his mouth, the alcohol very heavy in his breath but rather than be repulsed, or even turned off the scent, Chizuru found herself leaning in for more of him. "Really," he whispered, his lips

now closer to hers than they were last she noticed. What was he doing so close to her lips? What was she doing\_ letting\_ him get that close? She raised her eyes to his, his green eyes darker than she had ever seen them. Is that the look that girls were always going on about?

Involuntarily she licked her lips and his eyes instantly snapped down to them. The color in his eyes seemed to darken even further with a look Chizuru could only describe as bedroom eyes. She felt her face flush fiercely, she hadn't meant to cause that. Or\_ had\_ she? "I really am...sorry." he finally choked out, his eyes squeezed shut then before he let go of her all together and backed away completely.

Chizuru could still feel his rough fingers against her face as a rush of coolness chilled her skin. She didn't even realize how hard she was breathing until then, her hand was pressed against her chest, her heart racing in time with her breath. Not only that, but she knew that her face was bright red and she was thankful for the dim lighting. What she noticed most of all though was the sinking disappointment in Okita pulling away and the unshed tears that started to sting her eyes.

Her fingers instantly went to her eyes and she noticed Okita looked...ashamed? She wasn't sure what the look on his face at the moment meant and she suddenly felt \_angry \_for letting herself get carried away.\_ She\_ was a shamed of herself. Chizuru looked down at her feet and motioned to her drink, words couldn't come fast enough to ask for it.

Okita didn't seem to mind, instead he handed her her cup and she took a huge drink to calm her nerves. The swig was especially bitter and she squinted, forcing it down her throat rather than spitting back into her cup like she wanted to. It wasn't as fruity was before and she sucked in a huge breath when she finished. She stared down at her now empty cup, remembering Shinpachi's words. She wasn't sure why, but she was suddenly still thirsty.

"That's weird..." she mumbled softly to herself. She wasn't aware that he heard her. Before she could mention that she was going to get a refill, Okita's hand snatched her cup away from her a perplexed look on his face.

"What was this?" he asked, eyes suddenly no longer ashamed or whatever, but instead tense almost angry himself. He brought the cup up to his nose, shook his head and brought his gaze back down to her.

"It's..." Chizuru pressed her lips together and took her cup back, shocked at herself and judging by his wide eyes, he was too. His surprise didn't last long before amusement lit up his eyes, then he smirked lightly. "It's fruit punch. I can get my own, thanks." She knew he didn't offer to refill her cup, but she assumed that's what he was going to doâ€"to make it up to her for...\_whatever \_just happened.

His amusement instantly faded and that tense look was back, but fiercer. "\_Who\_ gave it you?" he asked, voice clipped and hard. His eyebrows were slammed down over his eyes and his lips were pressed into a thin line. Chizuru furrowed her brow, unfamiliar with the

sudden expression on his face. It was almost scary.

"What?" she shifted her weight from one heeled foot to the other, unsure what else to say or how to react. "It's justâ€"I got it in the kitchen."

Okita took a step towards her and Chizuru was surprised at herself for not shrinking away from him. A major part of her knew that he wouldn't hurt her, but the twitching of his jaw and clenched fists reminded her of that dangerous side of him. She wasn't sure how anyone \_ever \_dared go into a ring with him.

"\_ . .you\_?" he asked again, practically through clenched teeth. He took her cup away from her and she flinched slightly, causing him to suddenly look upset€"vulnerable again. His expression pinched slightly and he took a step back, the anger melting away to a stoic one. He shook his head and grunted under his breath, frowning. Chizuru had never seen such a range of emotion in him in such a short period of time. "Can you just, please, answer my question?"

Chizuru felt especially stubborn, she wasn't so sure what it was making her act like it, but she felt slightly proud of herself for it. "\_Why?" she asked, more curt than before and she crossed her arms. He stared down at her silently for a moment before he sighed, eyes staring up at the ceiling.

"Chizuru," He sounded slightly impatient, but he didn't show it. "We don't have fruit punch. At all."

She stared blankly at him, the dizziness she felt coming back full force now. Chizuru furrowed her brow, rationality immediately came to her despite her confusion. "Okita, you're beingâ€" she shook her head, "you're being\_ silly\_! What if one of the guys bought it and just didn't tell you?"

Okita shook his head, firmly this time. "No, Chizuru. The fridge is stocked with beer and liquor\_ only\_. We don't carry anything else on Mixer nights. \_Ever\_."

Chizuru frowned this time. If that were true, then what the\_ hell\_ had she drank? She suddenly felt sick. Nausea fought and roiled around in her stomach, making her press a hand to her mouth to fight back the urge to puke. The floor beneath her seemed to shift slight and she wobbled for just a second. Once she was sure that she wasn't going to puke on Okita's shoes, she looked up at him.

"But...Shinpachi gave me the fruit punch. He said you guys haâ€" "

Okita didn't even let her finish her sentence before he stormed past her, taking her cup back. "Shinpachi..." She heard him mumble, practically hiss. Chizuru hesitated only for a moment before she quickly followed him and his obviously angry path. She pitied anybody that didn't get out of his way fast enough.

"Shinpachi!" Okita easily shoved his way through the kitchen, Chizuru close on his heels to keep from pushing her own path and trying in vain to get him to stop, but no. He was a man on a mission to yell, or worse, hit someone.

Shinpachi looked up when Okita yelled for him, giving them both a drunken smile, his eyes bright and despite the drunken fuzz in themâ€”had a knowing, almost conniving look in them. That was all Chizuru needed to see to know what he did was on purpose. Apparently, that was all Okita needed to see as well, because in the blink of an eye he lunged at himâ€”practically jumping the table to get at him.

"Okita!" Chizuru screamed, diving for his shirt or arm to keep him at bay, but missed, catching air and stumbling. She was sure she had him and her world tilted just slightly. Chizuru scrunched her face and pressed her fingers to her temples. What the hell was wrong with her?

Luckily, Sanosuke and Heisuke managed to put themselves between the two, forcing them away from each other. Okita was visibly seething and Shinpachi arrogantly had his chest puffed out in challenge, no doubt thinking he could easily take him on, and quite possible, the world as well.

The group around them didn't seem phased at all, as they continued with their drunken games and actions as if the whole thing were completely normal. Only a few actually stopped to watch the two nearly butt heads, probably wishing and hoping for something to see. Shinpachi shoved at Heisuke, missing him completely as he shot a glare in their direction. Heisuke rolled his eyes and shot Chizuru a weary look.

"Whaâ€”th-he fuck, man!" Shinpachi slurred loudly and angrily.

Okita's jaw did that angry/annoyed twitch thing, like he was desperately trying to keep from exploding, or saying something he shouldn't. Maybe even biting down on his tongue, or quite possibly grinding his teeth. Overall, it wasn't a pleasant look.

"\_What the fuck?!\_" He echoed, giving his friend the full brunt of his angry expression. He lifted Chizuru's empty Solo cup and chucked it at him. "Who the \_fuck\_ gave you permission to give Chizuru alcohol?"

Chizuru's stomach curled with the word. Not that he said it, it made it that much more real to her and that odd taste to her punch suddenly made sense. And how was she to know? She'd never had alcohol until now, and honestly? ...It was much sweeter tasting than she thought.

Shinpachi's scrunched up his face, confused. "She did!" he gestured to her with an open palm, "She asked for a drink!"

Okita rolled his eyes, slamming his hands down on the counter next to him. "She asked for fucking fruit punch, you asshole!" He glared at him harder, "Have you ever stopped to think that this was her \_first \_time drinking...?"

The guys eye's were on her now and she blushed, feeling embarrassed at his confession on her part. She didn't remember telling him that she'd never had any before. Chizuru shifted and gave Okita a look that he ignored. Why did he have to say that? Why did he just assume

that about her, even though it was true.

"Well, I didn't know!" Shinpachi shouted back, throwing his hands in the air.

Chizuru shook her head and stepped forward, "You don't have to explain anything to him, Shinpachi!" Okita snapped his gaze to her, eyebrows furrowing in slight confusion and she found herself raising her chin in defiance. "In fact, I would really like some more of this faux fruit punch, if I can."

Anger and annoyance flitted through Okita's eyes quickly before they settled on a forced calmness. A new look to Chizuru, but she didn't look too long. Sanosuke made a move to get her a cup when Okita shot a glare to them all, stopping them from helping her. Without another word, Chizuru pushed past Okita and went straight for the fridge.

"Chizuru," Okita's voice was low and calm. She knew that he was trying to reason with her, but why was it he didn't think she should drink? She would be drinking in the company of friends, right? Chizuru was also sure that she'd be able to stop herself from having too much, it couldn't possibly be that difficult. "You don't have to do this. I wasn't trying to offend you orâ€"

"Or embarrass me?" she asked, shooting a pained look in his direction. They were her new friends, and the one she trusted the most, outed her like that? Yeah, it hurt. She didn't want to be the innocent girl who only drank juice at a college party, she wanted him to see her as a woman. But you have a boyfriend. She thought rationally. Yeah, and he's starting to treat you like he does too.

The thought was bitter tasting and she felt even more hurt. Out of all people, she had thought that Okita wouldn't ever treat her like she couldn't handle whatever it was that came her way. Sure at the moment it was something silly like drinking, but what about next time? She frowned and turned her attention back to the fridge.

"And you're wrong, by the way." She told him haughtily, raising her chin upwards again. "I have had alcohol many times before." Okita rolled his eyes and pushed away from her, running his hands through his hair in an aggravated way. Chizuru opened the fridge and let her eyes roam over the multiple labels of bottles and cans of different liquors.

Rum Chata, Bacardi, Vodka, Bourbon, Whiskey...Miller lite, Bud Lite, Coorsâ€"there were so many that Chizuru had to admit to herself that she was overwhelmed by her options. She managed to mask her emotions well, as she stuck her hand in and rummaged about, looking for the most delicious looking one.

Despite Okita's supposed 'all-knowing-no-juices-on-the-day-of-mixers' knowledge, she did spot a few clear through 2 liter bottle with what looked like multiple juices of all flavors. A sharpie was written on each, a red one was marked Riot Punchâ€"which she assumed she had, a light blue was marked Blue Bombsicle, and an orange one marked Screwdriver.

None rang a bell, but the orange one looked the safest and she

reached for that. Without making eye contact with Okita, she marched over to where they had a stack of clean Solo cups and she poured the drink all the way to the top. To prove her point, she took a huge drinkâ€"swallowing back her obvious reaction to the more potent bitterness this drink had than the fruit punch one, then refilled it.

"Delicious." She chirped through a tight smile. Chizuru handed the bottle off to Heisuke, "Do any of you guys want some...?"

They all objected, much to her chagrin, and she tried to shrug it off. She turned and handed the bottle off to Okita, who was trying very hard to appear calm but his eyes told her otherwise. Chizuru was a little too pleased that she had put him in his place, but the hurt she felt was still strong. What was going on in his head?

She occupied her thoughts with another swig and this time, she easily tasted orange juice, but the other bitter taste she was unfamiliar with. The drink slide down her throat easily enough, and strangely after her third or fourth big gulp, she started to feel warm. Warm and good. Really good. The feeling she assumed she'd feel after she met up with Okita and they hung out.

Before she realized it, she was yelling and hooting with the strangers at the end of the table who were playing the game she now knew was called Flip Cup. Chizuru tried to push the fact that Okita was watching her, not even two feet away from her, intently and full of purpose. Why, if he was so upset with her, did he feel like he had to babysit her.

She turned towards him and noticed his features soften a bit before he quickly masked them. He shifted his eyes away from her and took a long finishing drink out of his cup. Chizuru felt her annoyance with him resurface and she turned away, wanting to put that distance between them like she had tried to earlier.

As she entered the hallway, Sen's happy face swung in her line of vision and Chizuru smiled at herâ€"relieved to see a face that wasn't annoyed or angry at her, or made her annoyed or angry. "Sen!" she practically sang and she blinked a few times before smiling back just as enthusiastically.

Sen's eyes landed on the drink in her hand and she smiled up at her with a sparkle in her eyes. "Oh, I see you already hit the drinks, huh?" She laughed lightly and Chizuru automatically did as well. She didn't understand what was particularly hilarious about what she said, but it was the way she said it...or something like that.

Chizuru leaned towards her, "It's called a screwdriver! It's weird, but delicious!" Her eyes widened slightly as she emphasized the word delicious, but it was hard not to prove her point. Sen's eyes lit up with amusement and then they shifted over her shoulder and Chizuru followed her gaze, Okita standing in the doorway with his eyebrows raised in a nonchalant sort of way. She didn't trust it.

Nor did she trust Sen looking at him for very long. Chizuru made a face at Sen, making a show that she was annoyed with him which earned her a pinched expression from Sen. "Finish that drink and let's

dance, Chizuru!" She finally told her, pulling her towards the living room.

Chizuru stumbled a little at her pull, but managed to keep her footing on the suddenly uneven ground. The warmth was spreading with every passing second that she was thankful for wearing a dress. She fanned her face and lifted her curls from her neck as well. Chizuru just assumed the reason she was getting hot was because of all the people in the house. She wasn't use to it.

She put her cup on the table and turned to Sen, looping her arm through hers. "Alright, let's dance!"

Chizuru just hoped that she didn't make a fool of herself, but like before she arrived at the party, she felt \_confident.\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong><em>an: Aaah, just barely scratching the surface! :) Hope you enjoyed! Please let me know, so Read and Review! \_\*\*

## 9. Sober

\_ OkitaXChizuru Romance.\_

\*\*A/n: Thanks for coming back for more! :) Enjoooooy! \*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Crazy<strong>

\*\*Chapter 9: Sober\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Well, Okita could honestly say that Chizuru kept him on his toes.<p>

And he could also \_honestly \_say that he was a complete and utter douche bag. As a friend and as a person. Which was really bad, but he couldn't help his reaction when he first saw her. Okita wanted to kiss her, wanted to taste her lip gloss and kiss her full pouty lips. It was like a freaking shiny magnet in the dim lights, a beacon of light that attracted and begged for him to attend to them.

Was that so\_ wrong\_? He was a man, after all. It was an honest urge, but he planted the brakes on that before he created problems for her. He had meant to apologize, not try to kiss her. His inhibitions were wild with the amount of alcohol he consumed beforehand. He tried to shake it off afterwards, but the look on her face nearly had him diving back in to make it up to her.

The sober part of his head rationed, annoyingly so, that she was taken. Once again, not that Kazama deserved her...

After that, the whole spiel with the alcohol drink she had unwittingly started consuming, did not go as well as he hoped. He hadn't meant to offend her, for real, this time. He just couldn't push past the anger that he felt when he saw her pretty little face

scrunch up with distaste. When she told him she was drinking fruit punchâ€”fruit punch at a mixer?â€”he admittedly could't think rationally.

All he thought about was what could've been put in that drink, who could've given her Fruit punch and why in the hell did she willingly take it? He figured she was inexperienced, but to that extent? He shook his head, the thought still enraging. Of course there'd be someone offering her a drink, she looked beyond beautiful.

Short dress, long legs, pretty lips and she had the most alluring scent...it was part of the reason he started to lean towards her and got nearly mixed up with her lips.

Okita tried hard not to frown, he knew he should've listened to the guys earlier on how much he was consuming. Why hadn't he capped it off at two drinks? He mentally scolded himself over and over, feeling beyond idiotic for not having a more than rational mindset going into this night. He pressed two fingers to his temple and rubbed frantic small circles.

\_Get your fucking head in the game.\_ He thought angrily. \_Sober up, dammit!\_

He glanced out on the dance floor and tried hard not to gape at the sight of Chizuru under the blinking multicolored lights. She was a little clumsy, but not horribly obvious that she was a little tipsy. It easily could've been put off that she wasn't use to heels, which looked heavy in his option, probably for the best. At least she had something to anchor her to the ground, in case she did go bottoms up.

Other than that, she held her own compared to Sen. While Sen, danced with a little more flare and sexuality, Chizuru seemed to enjoy the music more. She wasn't dancing for attention, but rather to just dance on whim. She swayed and sashayed back and forth, her eyes closed as she mouthed along to the song, often times throwing her hands in the air.

For a moment, he seemed to forget what happened and that she was angry at him. For that moment, he simply watched her in awe and amusement. He liked when Chizuru let go and just had funâ€”even if it was only due to her drunken whim. She needed to have fun more often, and if things turned out okay after tonight between them, he'd see that she would.

At first, he didn't notice the other lingering eyes, what with being too focused and zoned on Chizuruâ€”but when some random male so and so started to approach her, he didn't even think. In record time, Okita was across the makeshift dance floor and intercepted the male who seemed to shrink back, an apologetic look on his face.

Okita only sneered down at him and then, shot a similar look to any other guys who may have thought it'd be a good idea to approach themâ€”namely Chizuru. Once he felt comfortable enough to relax, he turned back towards the two, just noticing how close Chizuru was to him now. He figured he'd see Chizuru's lovely features pucker up with anger again when she'd see him, but she didn't.

No, rather, her expression morphed into one of...longing. Something



he'd seen only in his fantasies. It struck him to his core and instantly heated his veins. He even felt his mouth go dry, mostly due to the fact that she was getting closer and closer to him until she was pressed against him, a pleased smile on her face.

"Dance with me." She didn't even ask or even wait for his response, before she took his hands and placed them on her waist.

For the first time, he was stunned. Frozen. What was an honest man to do...? One minute she was pissed at him, the next she was practically on top of him. And you're complaining? He heard his still slightly tipsy voice in his head. He narrowed his eyes, Yes. I am.

Okita lifted his hands from her waist and tried to pull them back, Chizuru puckered her glossy lip into a pout and made a grab for his hands again. Being a little more than drunk, she missed completely and started to tumble to the ground and Okita was quick to hold her up. Chizuru smiled up at him, eyes warm and liquid with need.

"Okitaaa..." she practically purred and he'd be damned if his knees didn't start shaking at that point.

"Chizuru," he leveled her with a stern stare that she pointedly ignored. "You've had way too much to drink, do you realize that?" he asked, quirking an eyebrow.

Chizuru rolled her eyes and he bit down on his tongue to keep from cracking a smile. Once he was sure she wasn't going to topple over, he slowly let his hands drop from her arms and she crossed her arms stubbornly. "I have not!" she slurred the last bit and she blinked slightly, her hand drifting to her forehead. "Oh! Uh, stop moving, Okita!"

He sighed, "I'm not moving," he told her and his eyes drifted over to Sen who hadn't even noticed Chizuru was no longer near her, her attention on some guy she was dancing with. Was this the care Chizuru was entrusted with? The thought unnerved him.

Chizuru glared, "Yes, you are!" she pressed her lips in a thin line. Yeah, she had stopped drinking for a couple minutes now that she was dancing, but that didn't mean the alcohol she had consumed was done working it's magic. It always took a bit to settle in a drunken haze. "Just...stop." She leaned towards him and took firm hold of his biceps.

That seemed to settle her confused look, but she now looked upset. Tears were in her eyes as she looked up at him, her expression pained and sad. Okita furrowed his brow, silently cursing the effects of alcohol over and over again.

"Why won't you danceâ€"with meh?" she hiccuped slightly, her tears hadn't fallen yet, but he could tell from the way her breaths were coming out shorter and shorter that she was close to a full blown drunken sob.

"Chizuru, shh, it's not like thatâ€"

She shook her head and frowned, one tear trickled down her face and Okita hated seeing that more than he hated the anger she had earlier.

He'd give anything for the anger rather than her tears. He was such a douche. Could he be a worse friend? Or person, for that matter?

And what was one dance? She probably wouldn't even remember it...Okita was pretty sure that the deep throbbing happening inside his skull was some sort of brain aneurysm. Soon, he'd find himself dying and writhing on the ground and he could only hope that no one helped him. Easily, he pulled Chizuru close to him, taking her hand in his and placing her other hand on his shoulder.

Okita's free hand slipped down to her waist and she blinked up at him a couple of times. Luckily for him, the song list choose that time to melt away into a slow and steady dance. He noticed out of the corner of his eye that people started to pair off, everybody dancing around them giving off major romantic vibes. He felt his stomach flip and flutterâ€"it annoyed him slightly.

The song wasn't helping either, considering the guy sang everything he was feeling in that moment. He had the odd sensation to punch whoever put the on the song list. His thoughts drifted off into oblivion when he felt Chizuru lay her head on his chest in such an intimate fashion. It was so natural for him to have her close, feeling the heat from her body warm his. He liked this. He also enjoyed that even in her heels, she still couldn't reach his shoulder.

Okita found that he didn't mind this and didn't even try to beat himself up for taking this moment. Instead, he let himself stop thinkingâ€"for once and just enjoyed the dance between them. Who knew if he'd ever have the chance again? Not to mention, if she'd take it back once she remembered. The thought was bitter and left a bad taste in his mouth, but he ignored it. He was not going to let himself ruin the moment.

After the first chorus of the song, he found himself humming like he knew the song, which of course, he didn't. He didn't much care for pop rock or whatever the song was categorized. But right then, he definitely did. The moment the song ended, he stopped their swaying and Chizuru lifted tired, hazy eyes up at him.

"Thank you." She whispered softly.

Okita felt himself blush and had to turn away from her. He had lost count how many times he had wanted her to look at him like that, but it wasn't real. Okita knew that she wasn't completely herself in that moment. She took a small step back from him and rubbed at her eyes in a failed attempt to keep sleep from further dragging her down. He laughed to himself and pulled her from the dance floor, to which she complied without fuss.

When she spotted her cup, she instantly reached for it but Okita beat her to it. "Uh, how about we get you some water now?" he casually suggested. Chizuru puckered her lips, looking like she might fight him on it but then started to yawn. Slowly, she nodded to his suggestion and followed him to get a water bottle.

Rather than take her back to the kitchen were the mob of party people still lingered, he led her to the well stocked mini fridge in the living room. They always brought out the mini fridge for parties,

usually stock full of water. He grabbed two and handed one to Chizuru, who took a big swig.

"How are you doing?" he asked, watching her carefully. Her features didn't perk up none, still looking like she might curl up on the ground and fall asleep, despite the loud music.

Chizuru tipped her head to the side, blinking a few times. "Good. Great." She nodded and yawned again.

This time Okita did smile, "You want to go home?" he asked.

She furrowed her brows and shook her head angrily. "No!" She blinked a few more times. It still didn't help. "I'm...just tired. It'll pass."

Okita shook his head, "Come on, then." Chizuru, once again, didn't argue with him and only followed. In the hallway, she swiftly reached her hand out towards him. Okita faltered slightly and looked down at their joined hands. The gesture was innocent, her eyes getting droopier by the minute and her steps more drunken.

He could tell she was on the verge of passing out, but all he could focus on was her hand in his. How perfect it felt, how soft her skin was and how it made him feel. He'd never felt that way before and he wasn't sure what to call it. Like? Desire?

Yes, he liked her. Of course he desired her. But he was sure it was much more than that, too.

Slowly, he continued to lead her to his room. If she refused to go home, then she could sleep it off in his room until she felt better or slept off the alcohol—whichever came first. She didn't seem to notice where he was taking her to, which he knew involved a lot of trust on her part and he liked that she trusted him like that.

When he reached his room, he gestured to the bed and she frowned. "Okita...I—" Chizuru blushed and stared down at her feet. The look on her face was a strange mix of nervousness and shyness—not at all what he thought. In fact, it started giving him other ideas, none of which he followed through with. But to know that she wasn't telling him no spoke millions to him. He let himself hope.

Hope for what, exactly? He wasn't sure. But it was there.

Okita placed his fingers against her face again and tipped her head up to him. "Listen to me, Chizuru." He gave her a soft smile, "This is just for you to get some rest. When you're ready to head back to the party, we can go back down. Ok? You just need to sleep this off first."

She blinked, blushed again and nodded. "Oh...okay." she slurred softly, "Thank you. That's thoughtful of you." Okita brushed a soft kiss to her forehead.

"Don't mention it, it's the least I could do." He pulled back and frowned slightly, "You know I didn't mean to offend you earlier...right?"

Chizuru smiled up at him and squeezed his hand, "I know." She

whispered softly before leaning into him. Her arms wound around him and she sighed into his chest. "I know you wouldn't hurt meâ€\_hic\_-on purpose."

Okita let his hand fall on her back, fingers dancing up and down. He had hugged many females before her, but this was...comforting. This was what hugging was suppose to make you feel like when you hugged that person. He could feel his heart go into overdrive and he was slightly worried she'd hear it. Or, at worst, feel it practically burst through his chest.

She pulled away, smiled, and stumbled towards the bed. Chizuru tripped at the edge, and tumbled right on the end of the bed. Okita winced, but didn't rush towards her due to the fact that she was giggling and mumbling to herself about not being able to stand on her own two feet. It was cute. She was cute.

Finally, she got on the bed, kicked off her heels and laid flat on her back with a long sigh. The whole thing was innocent on her part, but looking at her with her hair spilling around her, her dress straining against her body and bunching up in certain areas...well, it was pretty indecent.

Or at least, his thoughts were indecent. But he couldn't help it, really. He fought the urge to stare, the urge to imagine what her smooth legs would feel like underneath his hands, or what sounds she could make if heâ€

Okita abruptly halted his train of thought with a hard squeeze of his hands. He felt pain as his the skin around his knuckles tightened in an agonizing way, one he usually welcomed minutes before a fight and sure as heck more than welcomed the distraction now. His short nails bit hard into his palm, but it did the trick. His thoughts were anything but dirty at the moment and he was quick to use the moment to turn away. If ever there were a time to leave, it would surely be right at that moment. He was sure that Chizuru wouldn't hold it against him.

"Well, I'll be backâ€" He didn't even manage to finish his sentence before he heard her giggle, followed by a loud thud that sounded awfully painful.

Okita whipped around and found that the bed Chizuru had been on moments before was now empty. His eyes landed to Chizuru who was sprawled out and tangled with the comforter on the ground beside his bed. He tried to bite back the laugh that wanted to consume him, but failed miserably.

How had this happened in the span of about a minute?

Chizuru stared up at him, confusion evident on her face. She kicked at the comforter wrapped around her legs and tried to push herself up. "Whaâ€?" She frowned and continued to bat at the comforter, "Whaâ€happen?" Some of her curls were stuck to her lip gloss, the halter V-neck was shifted over in a dangerous way that threatened to play peek-a-boob with him, and Okita was pretty sure he could see what the color and pattern of Chizuru's underwear was.

Without letting his eyes travel further, he forced his eyes to stay trained on Chizuru's eyes. It was one of the most hardest things he

had to do in his entire life...well, next to not kissing her...or indulging in one of his fantasies with her. \_Overall\_, tough. He knelt down besides her and she stared up at him, blinking slowly and sleepily...drunkenly.

"Seriously, Chizuru?" he tried to sound stern, but it fell flat. "I turn my back on you for less than a minute and you're...\_so\_ tangled."

And she was. His comforter and bed sheet were wrapped half around her lower body before being spun around her legs. He wasn't sure \_how\_ someone managed to get so wrapped up in such a short time, but she managed to find a way to do it. She flailed her legs out again and he narrowly dodged her wayward leg.

"Whoa!" he caught her heel, "Calm down or you'll get more tangled!"

Chizuru wiggled slightly, but did as she was told. He shifted the sheets around and tried hard to concentrate on anything but her bare legs and how close they were now. He could practically taste her vanilla scented lotion. Being that close proved to be another obstacle. Okita found that his movements were stiff as he worked at the sheets and he blew out a frustrated breathe of air.

"\_Okay\_, new plan," he rocked back on his heels and reached out towards her. "Wrap your arms around my neckâ€"right. Just like that." He shifted Chizuru's small body to him when she did what he told her to do, then lifted her with ease, the sheets by her feet easily slipped away and she wiggled her feet.

Chizuru winced and immediately stopped wiggling her left foot. She bit her bottom lip to keep from whimpering, but Okita heard it anyway. His eyes instantly looked down at it and he frowned. "Where are you hurt?" he asked, trying to gauge her injury. He couldn't see any visible swelling or bleeding of sorts.

She nodded slowly and with a small bob of her head gestured to her left foot. "There's a stinging." She mumbled, quickly straightening her left leg out and shifting in his arms like he wasn't carrying her.

"Careful now, Chizuru or you'llâ€" "

Once again he didn't get a chance to finish his sentence before his feet sloppily tripped over the bundle of sheets he had momentarily forgot about. Chizuru's shifting caused Okita to shift as well to avoid touching her left leg, which really was quite difficult, and the small shift was all the distraction he needed in order to lose his balance.

Both thankfully and unfortunately, the bed was right there for them and he managed to turn them so he didn't lay on her. This time, okita found himself flat on his back, Chizuru laying flush across him in a most delicious way. He felt his throat go dry and he fought the instinct to reach up and pull her even closer to him.

But he didn't. He kept his head on straight, surprisingly, and reminded himself that she was hurt, she was drunk and she was \_not\_ his. The last thought was the most somber. Chizuru shifted and

frowned down at him.

"I'm sorry." She shook her head, winced, and lowered herself slowly back on top of him.

Okita gently patted her back, his fingers played with her curls when he reached them. "It's okay, you'll be okay." He reassured her.

Her head was placed directly over his heart and she nodded slowly. Chizuru lifted her head up and tilted her head, "Okita?" Her voice was getting more and more clear of it's slur, but he still didn't trust it too much. If anything, her buzz was plateauing.

"Chizuru?"

"Why didn't you kiss me?" she asked softly, dejectedly. Her eyes crinkled in the corners in the way they did when she was either extremely happy, or extremely upset. She lowered her eyes, "You said you didn't want to hurt me, offend me...and I wanted you toâ€" She trailed off and arranged herself on top of him, easily straddling him.

Okita let out a harsh breathe and tipped his head back onto the bed. \_Why is this happening to me?\_ He agonized. This was all he ever wanted, all he kept thinking about. Chizuru was in his room, on his bed, straddling him for heavens sake and yet...she was not free to make a move on.

Somebody was really testing him. Or at least, really, really hated him.

"Chizuru, your ankleâ€" Okita tried to rationalize, tried to move the conversation elsewhere but he couldn't. When he opened his eyes and looked up at her, his words died on his lips. Curled hair falling over her shoulders, eyes hooded with a slight buzz, lips puckered slightly, and her dress riding up legs.

\_Why, why, why is this happening to me? \_

"I wanted you to kiss me." She whispered, leaning down she laid her head in the crook of his neck and sighed deeply. "I \_want\_ you to kiss me..."

Air. Okita needed air. He was in short supply at the moment, but he was sure air wasn't the problem. He just couldn't breath properly. He needed space. Space to think, to rationalize, to...\_think \_because dammit, he couldn't form a single coherent thought.

\_Why are you pissing and moaning for? This is what you've always wanted! Seize it! \_Okita hated how tempting that small douche-like voice in the back of his mind sounded. But really, when had he become such a whiner? He was a man of action! Nothing less! He knew he needed to gain control of the situation again. He was sober now!

With the firm thought in his head, he let his hand slide to her waistâ€"taking a moment to enjoy the feel but he pushed forward. "Chizuru." He mumbled softly, turning his head slightly to glance at her. She didn't move, or speak and he let his right hand travel up

her back stopping only to play with her curls. "Chizuru...?"

He was about to shake her, a little worried, when he started to hear her light snoring. Okita couldn't help but smile and let his body relax. Instantly, he noticed just how heavy Chizuru was on top of him. Nothing he couldn't deal with, but definitely a sign that she was asleep. Gently, he shifted them so she could lay on the bed rather than straddled on top of him. Talk about an awkward morning.

Chizuru shifted slightly, but didn't wake up. With her asleep, he could stare openly at her and not feel like he had to hide what he felt when he looked at her. She was beautiful. In a new, refreshing way that was better than any attraction he'd felt previous to her. What \_was\_ it about her?

He couldn't exactly place what it was about her that drew him instantly to her. She held such power over him, power she didn't even know she had. Okita never thought he had a weakness, until now. A deep, down to his bone deep, chill rocked his body. If anyone else figured how that out, he'd be in serious trouble. \_She'd \_be in serious trouble.

Being part of the Underground, as secret as it was, wasn't exactly...rule abiding. Anything went inside or outside the cement ring. If they wanted to use Chizuru as bait, as collateral, or whatever they would. His fingers twitched slightly at the thought. As much as he hated to admit it to himself, it was better that she was with Kazama. His name was well known in the Underground as the number one person to \_avoid\_.

For the last year or so, he'd been after them. More than any of the Underground's previous enemies, Kazama was their most cleverest ones to date. He wanted to take down the infamous Underground and rid it for good. And if Okita had to, he'd reveal who Chizuru was.

He bit down hard, hating the idea, but knowing that it was smart and it would keep her safe. It was the least Kazama could do for his girlfriend. Okita held back his frustration, remembering that Chizuru was sound asleep next to him. She didn't need to be involved with him, or his Frat...hell, she didn't deserve to be involved with the asshole Kazama, but he couldn't keep away from her.

Okita already knew he was in too deep to pull away now. If he had to, he'd pull the Kazama card, but he hoped that it wouldn't get that far. If anything, he had to keep their friendship on the low or on the need to know basis when it came to his matches. And if she was with that friend of hers like last time, then she'd be good.

He felt slightly more reassured than a moment before and shifted to glance at Chizuru again. Her lips were puckered out slightly, her breathes quietly entering and exiting her body along with the occasional sleepers twitch. He felt himself smile down at her, his fingers automatically lifted to brush her bangs from her face.

\_You are playing with fire, Okita. \_He reminded himself and he dropped his hand from her face. Willpower. He had to have more willpower. Okita also knew that he should've walked away, gone back down to the party and let Chizuru just sleep...to rest, recover, or whatever. He knew he could easily check back on her, but...he

couldn't. Or rather, he didn't want to.

The warmth from his earlier buzz still lingered, if only a little bit, and he let thatâ€”along with his inner desireâ€”guide him. He didn't plan on doing anything \_bad\_, but he had to admit the bed was a much better, albeit selfish, option than the floor. Chizuru would forgive him and it wasn't like he was a bed hog that would get in her personal space.

No, he'd be \_respectable\_.

This also may have been the one and only time he'd be able to share a bed with Chizuru. He felt himself slowly start to drift off and he smiled to himself. Chizuru's sleeping face was the last thing he saw before he closed his eyes and slept.

\_I could get use to this.\_

\* \* \*

><p>Suffocating. Hot. Immobile. Head pounding...and <em>very<em> hot.

Those few words were only the top five that kept popping into her groggy, sleepy mind. She just wanted to roll over, find comfort and drift off again. Chizuru wasn't sure \_why\_ everything hurt, why everything seemed off, or why she felt incredibly hot all over.

She tried to shift her position to get more comfortable, but once again felt stuckâ€”\_immobile.\_ Slowly, she forced her eyes to open, determined to find sanctuary for her heated skin. Bright lights, probably from her window, kept her from opening them further. Instead, she squeezed her eyes shut again and she sighed out loud in a slight whine.

The pressure seemed to lessen then and she instantly took the chance to turn onto her side. The heat increased. Why was it so damn hot all of a sudden? It was getting closer to the colder months and Chizuru was curious if Sen had cranked the heat or not. That made sense in her garbled mind. With purpose, she started to shift out of the clothes she was wearing as much as she could.

The pressure only let her do so much and she gave up half way through, settling on another whiny sigh. She would focus on all that, later. When she wasn't tired anymore and then, then she'd find out what was going on around her. It was the weekend, she had time to catch up on her sleep before she needed to get things done.

\_Yes.\_ She thought calmly as she started to drift off again, \_I'll do that when I wake up...\_

"Chizuru,"

Chizuru smiled in her dream at the sound of Okita's voice. It was soft, hushed and filled her with a whole new warmth. It wasn't unusual for her to dream of him. His voice sounded so close, so real, so...raw. She hummed in acknowledgement to his call.

"Chizuru..."



There it was again. Deeper and huskier than normal that it practically buzzed across her skin. Before she could call out to him, she felt more warmth and pressure shift over her and force her to lay on her back. Chizuru could see Okita, smiling down at her—his eyes warm and burning down at her. She liked seeing that look in his eyes.

He wrapped his arms around her, bent his head down to whisper her name in her ear. She liked hearing him say her name and if she weren't dreaming, she'd be embarrassed of how good it felt to hear it. In her dreams, she could indulge in her honest fantasies. There, he didn't reject her, she didn't have to think about Kazama or her father or brother. There was just Okita and her and her feelings.

She felt Okita press his lips to the base of her neck, heat scorching and practically reducing her to puddles. His arms tightened their hold on her and she imagined that it was to keep her from falling, which was a good call since she was sure her legs were jelly.

He whispered her name over and over as he kissed his way up her exposed neck, his arm around her and his other trailing up and down her back before skimming over her stomach and moving upwards. She sighed in a sweet, pleased way—in a way to encourage him and he did. The pressure on her felt good, satisfying.

Okita paused only slightly before he pressed his mouth to hers in a heated kiss. The kiss was anything but ordinary, or slow. It felt real. His lips were soft, but firm in the way they took over hers. She squirmed in his hold and wanted so badly to dig her hands in his hair like she imagined doing so many times recently, but his hold around her prevented her from being able to do so.

Chizuru felt his tongue sweep across her bottom lip—once, twice, before she opened to comply. There was only a handful of times she and Kazama had shared such kisses, but he didn't like them. And really, they were never like the one she was currently experiencing. They ignited her, had warmth spreading throughout her like the alcohol she drank last night...

Last night. \_

All at once, a thousand images flooded Chizuru's mind of last night. Drinking, dancing, Okita and his bed. His room. She flung her eyes open and stopped breathing all together when she found Okita on top of her, kissing her...not a dream, but very much real.

Chizuru froze, hating that she had to put a stop to their actions but knowing that she had to. The pressure and heat made sense now. Being immobile because his arms were wrapped around her as they slept, his body heat making her body hotter than usual, and her head hurt from having one too many last night. After he tried to warn her, but she let her pride win out.

She never let herself get that way.

Okita stopped his kissing, pulling back with half closed eyes and she was sure, much like herself, he had no idea what he was doing. She wasn't sure which hurt more at the moment, but she forced herself to

keep from breaking into full blown sobs. It wasn't the time and she knew he'd get the wrong idea.

"O-Okita...?" she heard herself say out loud, her voice trembled only slightly, but she could feel her tears start to burn her eyes. She was so embarrassed. How was she going to explain this to him? What was she going to say?

She watched as his eyes opened further, reality setting in as he started to shake off the haze of sleep. His eyes widened as he started down at her, their actions probably coming back full blown now that he seemed alert. "Chizuru...?"

His eyes were smoldering one moment before turning to complete dread and...regret. The look completely broke Chizuru and the tears she was holding back started to tumble from her eyes full force. Of course, this wasn't real. Of course, he'd regret it. Of course, he'd feel bad about giving her the wrong idea.

"I'm...Iâ€"uh," He pushed up to his hands and the pressure lifted off of Chizuru instantly. It made her feel cold and alone. Chizuru shifted and winced at the throbbing pain both her head and left ankle gave her. She remembered her tumbling to the bed \_and \_off the bed. She pressed her hands to face and tried to bury her embarrassment.

How could do this to him? How could she let herself get so out of control as to let him see her like that? She could only imagine what he thought of her now. She wanted to prove that she wasn't as inexperienced as he made her seem, but she just proved him right. Chizuru wasn't sure what to say to him to fix what happened. To ease him of his guilt or...to make herself seem better.

What would Sen do?

Behind her hidden hands she gasped slightly, what about Sen?! She quickly dropped her hands and searched for her phone. Okita sat back and looked at the wall off the side, in the opposite direction of Chizuru. His features were pinched and angry, his fists were clenched around the bed spread and his jaw was tense. Did she really upset him that badly?

She pushed the fresh wave of tears from coming and found her phone. She had one missed call and text from Sen.

\_Heading back with a friend! Don't w8 up! ;) \_

Chizuru felt a little relieved, but not by much. Slowly, she put her phone back down and spared a glance at Okita. He was still glaring at the wall, his whole body tense. She opened her mouth to say something, but couldn't find the words. Instead, she looked down at the bed and tried to fend off the earlier feeling of Okita's lips on hers.

"First drawer on your right. Put on the shirt in there."

Okita's voice startled her and she turned to the dresser drawer he mentioned. Why? She glanced down at her dress and quickly wrapped the bed sheet up to her chestâ€"which had been exposed. How had she not realized that?! She felt her face heat up and she shifted to open the

drawer.

"Uh...thank you." She grabbed the first shirt and slipped it on over her dress after she adjusted the top. The shirt easily fell to her thighs, surprisingly longer than her dress was. His scent overwhelmed her in the most pleasant way and she blushed again. "D-did we...?" Parts of her night were still blurry, but she felt like she had to ask.

Okita's posture hardened even more so, if possible. "\_No\_." He snapped. "You were drunk. Believe it or not, I \_don't\_ take advantage of drunk girls."

Chizuru flinched and frowned, "That's not what I was implying..." she whispered softly, hurt.

"Fuck." Okita swore and hit the bed beneath him before quickly shifting to his feet. The movement startled Chizuru, but other than that, she kept her eyes trained on him. It wasn't like she was scared, she was just worried that he was angry at her. What could she say to make this situation better?

Okita started to pace back and forth, occasionally pushing his hands through his messy bed head hair, and then paused with his eyes shut tightly. Slowly she shifted to the end of the bed and managed to get off, her ankle still throbbed but she could walk on it if she had toâ€"which at this point, was her best option.

With Okita still deep in thoughtâ€"or guiltâ€"she hip-hopped as quietly as she could about the room in search of her shoes. Chizuru managed to find them easily, but wasn't so sure she could actually wear them with her ankle hurting her like it was. And how was she to walk back to the dorm with a T-shirt on and her party dress from last night?

Tears of frustration and agitation welled up in her eyes and she dropped her heels, the noise finally snapping Okita out of his reverie. His eyebrows furrowed and his eyes followed her as she sank onto the edge of the bed again, wincing at the pain. Okita was knelt down beside her in an instant, his hands on her ankle.

"It's swollen." He mumbled, "I didn't get a chance to get ice for you yesterday, sorry." His eyes pinched and she turned away to avoid seeing his obvious emotions. She got it that he didn't want her like that, but she could only take so much visual confirmation of the fact.

"It's okay." She shrugged and pressed her fingers to her eyes to keep the tears from falling.

"It's not." Okita shook his head, his tone curt. "\_None\_ of this is okay." The last part was especially quiet, but Chizuru heard it anyway.

The tears managed to force their way through Chizuru's fingers regardless of how hard she pushed at her closed eyes. The pressure only worked momentarily and she ducked her head to avoid him from seeing. How much worse, or humiliating, could this situation get? As if her heart and feelings weren't suffering enough already...

"I \_get\_ it." She heard herself whisper, her voice sounding unfamiliar to her own ears. Her chest was starting to heave, the way it did when she was trying to hold back sobs, trying to keep herself from falling apart in front of Okita. "I understand you're mad at me, Okita. I understand that you didn't want to be beside me, I understand that you didn't want to kiss me, I understand and get it all, ok? Just...drop it." Her voice trailed off into a light sob.

A long silence came over them and Chizuru fought back the continuing sobs, forcing them into smaller almost non-noticeable ones. Finally, after what felt like ages, she heard Okita speak. His tone was soft, but not like before. No, now it sounded...agonized.

"Is that what you think?" he asked her, but she refused to lift her head, the words shocking her and making her frozen.

\_What?\_

She felt his fingers drift to her either side of her face, cradling her, before gently lifting her face to look at him. The earlier guilt or remorse she saw was completely gone and now was just pure...agony? She really wasn't sure what the look in his eyes meant, but they were angry or guilty, or anything that hurt her heartâ€"instead it made her want to reach for him, to comfort him.

"I have wanted to be with you like this since I met you. I have wanted to kiss you, hold you, lay with you and everything else, damn it. Don't think for one minute that's not what I've been fantasizing about," Chizuru felt her face redden with his sudden confession. He gave her a brief smirk, which made things seem suddenly lighter. "If this were under different circumstances, I wouldn't think twice...but you \_know\_ why this can't be okay."

Chizuru felt herself frown, not understanding at all. Her mind was slowly trying to play catch up and trying to take everything he was telling her in. Why can't it be okay for them to admit their obvious attraction...? The sudden realization hit her like a ton of bricks and she felt a new onslaught of tears well up in her eyes.

\_Kazama! Oh my god...my boyfriend. \_

She felt her mouth drop open and Okita slowly let his hands drop from her face. His features were pulled tight, but he wasn't angry anymore. He was pained, most likely for her part, but she didn't like seeing it on his features either way. He was always happy, snarky, and anything but...\_hurt\_. Her immediate reaction was to latch onto him, to try and ease his hurt or whatever, but she stayed rooted to the bed.

Why was she more upset over seeing Okita upset then thinking about what she'd done to Kazama?

"I know you're not that kind of girl, just as I'm not that kind of guyâ€"contrary to popular belief." Okita pushed his hair from his face.

"I know." She heard herself say automatically. She knew better than to believe what others said, especially about Okita. She'd experienced it first hand how wrong people were. Being friends with him taught her that as well. Not only that, but she knew that people

liked to gossip, no matter what day and age.

Okita gave her a ghost of a smile, eyes relieved but still guarded. She could tell he was tense and she hoped he wouldn't stay like that for a while. "We should get you back to your dorm." He pushed himself to his feet and Chizuru nodded.

She gathered her remaining things and then froze, her eyes wide. Okita shifted and glanced back at her. Chizuru hesitated, but pushed through her discomfort. "How will I get passed the Student Council house without anyone seeing me?" she asked, on the verge of panic. She frowned and sat back down on the bed. What she would give to just curl up and waste the day there. She didn't want to face reality, where things were suddenly confusing for her.

Okita turned back towards her, "I'll take care of it." He walked back towards her and pushed her hair back. She subconsciously leaned into his hand and they both quickly pulled away from each other. "You just wait here. I need to get some ice and wrap for your ankle anyway."

He turned to leave but Chizuru stopped him again, "Okita...Iâ€" She paused and instinctively hunkered down in his shirt. "This doesn't make me that kind of girl, does it?" she asked, her voice wobbling slightly.

Okita silently watched her, a small smirk appeared on his face. "You weren't conscious, Chizuru. Neither of us were. It wasn't a sober thought or action. You didn't trick me into bed with you, or to kiss you, or make a move on me. It just happened. So no," He shook his head, "It would take a lot more than a one time kiss to make you that kind of girl."

Chizuru nodded slowly and thanked him before he left her alone with her thoughts. Oh, how she wished things were different, like Okita said.

Under different circumstances...

Chizuru drew her knees to her chest and buried her face there. She just wanted to shrivel up and disappear. Curl up and never come out until she figured out the best way to deal with the situation. Had science and technology invented a reset button yet? Chizuru grimaced at the thought. Even if she did have the option, she was sure she wouldn't push it for that moment.

If she had to, she'd probably reset the time she agreed to be Kazama's. Chizuru could help but frown, guilt and obligation bubbling up inside her. When had she started to feel that way? Had it always been there? Just barely beneath the surface just as Kazama's attitude was?

She didn't feel shocked that she felt like that. She felt more relieved, like she was finally letting herself accept the fact that she was slowly falling out of love with her boyfriend and...falling for someone else completely.

Chizuru wrapped her arms around herself and clutched Okita's shirt tightly against her. It was more than just a casual thing, fleeting feeling. She knew deep down that it was different. More. Kazama's

shirtsâ€"or rather jackets, since he'd never let her wear anything other than thatâ€"never made her heart skip, jump and somersault like Okita's did. She shifted her gaze to the door and she reminded herself that she had to think about Kazama but it was a failed attempt.

\_It definitely is different.\_

\* \* \*

><p>Okita had a major headache. One that had nothing to do with yesterday's drinking, but how he wished it did. He brought his fingers up to his temple and began to rub at them. When was he going to stop with his fuck ups? When was he going to stop himself from wanting more than Chizuru could give? When was he going to realize how futile his feelings were?<p>

He already knew that they wouldn't work out. Okita was all piss and vinegar, Chizuru was all sugar and a pinch of spice. They ran in different worldsâ€"she was good and he was...border line everything. He couldn't possibly drag her into his messed up and more than often rule breaking one. He knew that, without a doubt, she wouldn't even think twice about being there or how it would (could) effect her. She was too nice to do that. To complain.

Okita sighed loudly, angrily. He'd already thought about all that. He'd made his resolve last night. For the time being, it was better that she was with her boyfriend. He tipped his head backwards and pinched the bridge of his nose. He was sure he was giving himself a migraine.

He knew better than to sleep beside her! Yeah, in hindsight, he made a very stupid decision, but he never thought he'd ever do something like that! He wasn't known to be a cuddler, or whatever it was he did. Sure, he had vivid dreams before and he had thought that's just what that was! It was all subconscious, like he had mentioned to her. Unintentional, except for his dreams.

And yeah, in his dreams, he was working with a lot less than her dress but regardless. His actions were inexcusable and putting her through that was just as bad. He didn't like that she was thinking she was suddenly a bad person. And he wasn't the kind of guy who went after girls who were taken, or typically involved himself in that kind of thingâ€"sure he'd been in that kind of tangle on accident, but how was he to keep track of every girl who threw themselves at him?

\_Isn't that exactly what you've done? Involved yourself? \_He couldn't argue with himself on that one. But he thought he could be stronger. He didn't think she had such a strong hold over him. Liar. \_You knew exactly.\_

Okita really hated that little voice in his head that didn't bother babying him. He had no filter whether it came to others or even himself. He gave an angry sigh and pulled at his hair in an exasperated way. It's the way he'd often seen Hijikata do when he thought no one was looking.

The whole situation, if he were honest, although bad wasn't all bad. He didn't actually regret a single thing. That's what pissed him off

the most. He wasn't like that, but he knew it was only because it had to do with Chizuru. Even the slightest taste of her moved him for miles and, for the time being, was enough. He'd lost count of how many times he'd imagined, dreamed and thought about her lips and they were not a let down.

Not only that, but he liked knowing how she felt about him. Which was bittersweet in so many ways. First, she was slowly standing up to Kazama the douche and weening herself off of him. Second, she was becoming much more independent and free speaking with every passing day (something he liked to think he had a hand in bringing out in her.) And thirdly, that she was feeling just the same as he did about her. Their feelings were mutual, in the best way possible.

Okita was at war with himself. He wanted to rejoice in all of that, but he wanted to be angry and try to put a permanent wedge between their mutually growing feelings. If things kept up, there'd be breakup in Chizuru's future (one he was sure Kazama wouldn't let happen smoothly) and he knew it would only be right to give Chizuru time before trying to be with her.

He wasn't a very patient guy when it came down to things like that. And then there was his whole Underground thing. It would be too much too soon. He didn't want something brief with her, something that she'd only chalk up to experience or worse, regret. No, he wanted it to lastâ€”maybe not forever, but surely a lot longer than his typical relationships.

He wanted to rock her world, wanted to show her the best things in life that he could show her, and be good for her. That would take some time. Okita wasn't sure where his life was heading at the moment, but at the moment, he was really thinking seriously about it for the first time since getting admitted to the school.

Better late than never.

Overall, Okita had never appreciated a Frat party more than he did last nights. If it weren't for the alcohol, albeit a bad idea, Okita would've never known her feelings. Of course, he'd like to assume that she felt the same way, but he knew better than to just make an ass of himself by just assuming. He felt guilty for thinking all of that, for feeling good despite her despair. Okita shook his head and ran a hand through his hair in aggravation as his mind continued to bounce around.

It sucks being sober.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>An: Welp. Yeah. Hah. I promise it's picking up speed! :) So please let me know what you think! Read and Review, lovelies! Thanks again for the patience, the follows, and the likes! Happy Holidays! \*\*

## 10. Warning

OkitaXChizuru. Romance.

\*\*a/n: Welcome, welcome to another chapter update! :) Thanks for the

follows, the favorites, the reviews, etc! So, sit back, relax and read! :)\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Crazy</strong>

\*\*Chapter 10: Warning\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><em>You should be ashamed of yourself! </em>Chizuru chided herself. \_How could you do that to Okita? To...Kazama? How is this fair to either of them?!\_

She hung her head and reminded herself, again, that she had to focus on Kazamaâ€"how Kazama would feelâ€"not Okita. The constant reminder wasn't helping at all. Her thoughts always lead back to Okita and how she hoped that nothing dramatic would change between them. She liked what they had (despite her growing feelings) and she didn't want to go back to square one with him.

\_This is why you don't drink!\_ She scolded herself. Most people get headaches and ended up hugging toilets, but not her. No. She cheated. Granted, it was the morning after and she was perfectly sober and good, except for her ankle...and the slight pounding inside her head...and slightly wounded pride. Or, more appropriately, \_guilt.\_ Chizuru knew she deserved the toilet hugging scenario.

But what was she to do now? Apologize? Did she want to tell Kazama about what happened? She knew that lying to him about something like that was huge, but then that would lead to questions like how she was constantly lying to him about being friends with Okita, or going out to parties without him, etc. Chizuru ducked her head in her hands and sighed loudly. Tears were on the verge of resurfacing again and she stubbornly put that to an end.

She put herself in this situation and crying was not going to help! Despite how good it felt to make herself miserable, since she deserved it and all, but she didn't want to bother Okita with more tears. He'd handled most of them rather well, she wasn't sure how much more he could handle though and she didn't want to push it. He'd been rather patient and great with her. Like the good friend he was.

Very good friend. With handsome green eyes...and very soft lips.

\_Pull yourself together!\_ She tapped her face to keep her mind focused. \_Kazama=good. Okita=not...right now! \_

Chizuru frowned slightly. Who else could she tell? It wasn't something she wished to bring up or discuss with anyone...but she certainly couldn't keep it bottled up! She idly wondered what Sen would do, what she would think. Chizuru flung her hands in her head and ruffled her already beyond tangled hair.

\_Why drag her into this?! She isn't your only friend!\_ Chizuru winced slightly and sighed, her hands dropping back down to her lap. Actually, she was her only \_female\_ friend so far. In her hometown,



she had acquaintancesâ€”none at all were ever as friendly as Sen had been. And what if Sen hated her after she told her? No, she would not risk it.

Her eyes landed on a water bottle Okita had given her last night. Instantly she reached for it and took a big gulpâ€”the water did miracles for her dry throat and seemed to clear her head. Chizuru frowned as she took another sip, more images of last night flying through her mind as she remembered more and more.

\_Last night, last night. Something important happened last night\_. She knew something did, but she couldn't quite remember what. She pushed the images away and decided to think about it later, when she didn't have other more pressing matters to attend to first...like waiting for Okita to get back to her.

Finally, after about ten minutes or so, he walked back in and held up the things he went in search of. He gave her a small smirk before kneeling down by her. "Let's get this ankle wrapped up and get you back to your dorm, alright?"

Chizuru felt herself nod and she let Okita slide his hand around her swollen ankle. She winced slightly and his eyebrows furrowed. "Sorry. It's gonna hurt like a bitch for a little bit, ok? Bare with it." She watched as he elevated her foot and balanced it on his propped up knee. He had tan colored Ace brand wrap and wound it tightly around her ankle.

It only hurt for a little bit, not nearly as bad as she thought, before he gently laid her foot back down. Okita rocked back on his heels and flashed her a grin. "Now on to the next task." He stood up and handed her a baseball cap with his Frat's symbol on it. "Put that on and make sure to tuck all of your hair in it."

Chizuru knew it would be an easy task to do consider her hair was a messy mane of hair anyway. Sort of a blessing, really, considering how bad it looked and she didn't have a brush to tame it to look presentable. "Okay." She took the cap but couldn't help but wonder what was the point of it.

When she did as she was told, Okita handed her a pair of his sweatpants. "Put those on too." He instructed, turning awayâ€”thankfully, she was sure her face was bright red at the moment.

\_What the heck...? \_

Chizuru simply stared at the simple black sweatpants, also with the Frat's logo on it, that had his name stitched on the inside tag. Probably to keep from getting mixed up with someone else's in the house when they did laundry or whatever. She pursed her lips in confusion.

"Not that I don't appreciate it, but why...?" she tipped her head to the side and Okita turned towards her, having turned away from her so she could slip on the pants over her dressâ€”privacy without really needing it. She tried hard not to smile at that small fact.

\_Focus!\_

"I said I'd take care of it, didn't I?" He raised an eyebrow like the

answer to her question was simple. Chizuru still didn't quite understand what his sweatpants or a baseball cap had anything to do with it. He gave her another smirk, one that set off a spark in his deep green eyes. He was amused. "Unfortunately, the Student Council house next door is very much alive with activity"so sneaking past them is impossible. But," He gestured to her shirt and sweatpants. "If we hide in plain sight, well, we won't have to sneak we can just walk."

"Oh"oh!" Chizuru gave him a smile of appreciation, her own ease making her body relax. He was giving her clothes to disguise herselfnot to mention it was nice not to have to prance around in the daylight in her party dress. She stared down at the sweatpants with gratitude.

Without further protest, she donned the sweatpantswhich engulfed her tiny body. She hiked the sweats up to her waist, tucked Okita's shirt in, and pulled the strings as tight as they would go. But even on her it was still quite a bit to tighten, even with the shirt and dress beneath adding to her bulk didn't help her cause.

Chizuru carefully balanced, trying hard not to put too much weight on her injured foot. She glanced up at Okita, who was trying hard not to laugh, but it wasn't working too well. She automatically felt her features pinch and she crossed her arms as a reflex.

"What's so funny?" she asked with a small pout.

Okita shifted away and shrugged, "You, obviously." He gave her a once over and chuckled again. "Those pants look...ridiculous\_ on you. No offense."

"Just because you say that doesn't mean one doesn't have the right to\_ feel\_ offended!" She sighed and glanced down at the sweatpants. She would probably need to roll them up, otherwise she'd ruin the cuffs by stepping on them over and over. "...maybe if I borrowed some pants from Heisuke, they'd fit better...?"

The laughter faded from Okita's eyes and he shook his head, "There's no time." He answered. "Besides, he doesn't share like\_ I\_ do." He winked and Chizuru couldn't help but grin at him. Somehow, she doubted that but she liked that things were still somewhat at ease between them, despite what happened mere minutes ago. With the thought, her eyes automatically slide down to his lips that were currently pulled into that sexy half smile of his.

He caught her stare and his half smile faded, his own eyes zeroing in on own lips and she subconsciously licked them, causing him to take a sharp breathe that led them into an uncomfortable silence. How was it that he could still look at her like that when she was wearing nothing better than a baseball cap and baggy clothes...?

\_Well so much for things not being awkward. \_

Finally, at the same time, they both seemed to snap out of it and regrouped. Chizuru resisted the urge to slap her face to wake her up from her momentary insanity. She needed to think clearly and be focused on the present. Not what happened, but rather, what was going to happen.

\_Focus. Kazama, Kazama, Kazama...\_

"Umâ€uh" Chizuru turned back to face Okita who, if she wasn't mistaken, was blushing. The slight pink on his cheeks was quick to fade though, so she couldn't stare too long at it to confirm her thoughts. The idea did calm her. "D-do you really think this will fool anyone who happens to see me?" she asked.

Okita gave her a small smirk again, "If they're not looking at you directly in the face, then yes." He reached over and tugged on the brim of her hat. "And so long as you don't speak out loud. Can you do that?" he asked.

Chizuru playfully swatted at his hand, "I think I can manage, thanks." Okita shrugged nonchalantly and started to lead the way out of the room. Chizuru smiled after him and grabbed her heels and water bottle before following him.

Disappointment started to settle in her stomach at the thought of her finally leaving Okita's bedroom. In fact, she didn't even get the chance to observe her surroundings and actually take in his room.

Unlike the dorms back on campus, the Frat houses were built like a regular huge house. There were several big bedrooms with, depending on how many members, multiple beds in the rooms left up to the occupants to design. Okita'sâ€for oneâ€was a single occupant room, twice as big as her dorm which often times felt like a closet with both her and Sen in it.

He had simple beige rug that matched the dark brown paint of his walls, two windows on one side of the room with dark, dark green curtains. His bed was a King sized bed with just as simple and basic comforter set. The room held two matching side tables that went along with the bed frame and ottoman at the end of the foot of the bed.

Another thing, Chizuru noticed the near to almost bare walls of his bedroom. He had the occasional poster, one corner folding from old tape, a calender closest to his bed, wall clock and bulletin board along the opposite side of his windowsâ€a large desk area that held a laptop charging on top of it.

One could hardly tell that someone actually lived there long term for a while now. She tipped her head, curious on the lack of personal possessions in his room, but figuring that guys weren't as sappy and showy like girls were. Okita was no Sen, by any means. Her side of the room held glitter and bright, almost obnoxious colors on every thing she owned. Chizuru actually related to Okita when it came to his room.

She was sure that if she didn't have a roommate, her room would look the same as his did. Chizuru had left a lot of her things at home, in her room that held a lot of different things from growing up. Letting her eyes roam the room once more, she finally followed Okita out.

\_Alright now. Focus, focus!\_

But all she could think about was how her things would definitely

compliment the few things he had in his room.

\* \* \*

><p>Okita tried hard not to reach out and simply hold Chizuru. Especially while she was wearing his clothes, it was a huge turn on, even if her curves were hidden. It was an urge that he wished he had the privilege to indulge in, but he knew better. He already had way more than he should've and he knew he could get by with that alone, but it was hard to watch Chizuru wobble alongside himâ€”or more accurately, behind him.<p>

Her face pinched beneath the ball cap and she would quickly wipe it off her face when he turned to look at her, but she wasn't always quick enough. Okita could only imagine what kind of pain she was in. He waited at the bottom of the steps and gave her a reassuring smile.

"Take your time, we're in no rush."

Chizuru flashed him a slightly forced smile, "I'm okay, really." She leaned against the railing and wobbled gently down to the final step.

"Chizu, I didn't believe you at the \_top\_ of the steps and I won't believe you \_now\_." He glanced down at her ankle, idly wondering if she'd out rightly refuse his help if he offered to carry her? He opened his mouth to voice his thoughts when she started to wobble along.

"Well, fine then." She glanced at him, not bothering to hide her slight wince. "It hurts \_a lot\_. But if I stay still for too long it hurts worse, so let's keep moving!"

Okita reached out and took her shoes, laying them on the foyer where most of the shoes stayed. "Let's leave those here for now," He grabbed her hand and pulled her up and close to his side, supporting most of her weight as his arm slid underneath hers. With his height, he easily lifted Chizuru clear off her feet and then bend down some so the very tips of her toes skimmed the floor.

Chizuru gasped in shock and then started to grumble in protest when she realized what he was doing. She pressed her lips together in her usual stubborn way and tried to shift out of the hold. Okita squeezed her hand and gave her his most stern look he could muster.

"Don't fight me on this, Chizuru! The least you could do is let me help you down the porch stairs, right?" he shifted her and she teetered only slightly before she let herself lean her weight fully on Okita.

"Alright," She sighed, trying not to frown. "but \_only\_ \_down\_ the front steps! It seems that it hurts more going \_down\_ the stairs anyway..."

Okita turned away to hide his smile as he helped her to the front door, carefully maneuvering around crushed cups and sticky spots, and finally out onto the porch that wasn't in much better condition. The front board had Heisuke's name written on there for clean-up duty and, man, did the house \_really\_ need it. He was thankful that no one

was up yet to make comment on Chizuru or even see her, Okita could only imagine what they would say.

Surprisingly, the house was incredibly quiet for a Sunday morning but he was sure that if Hijikata had been there, everyone would already be up and cleaningâ€”despite what the board said. He was a stickler for clean places and Okita sure as hell didn't have time for that. Besides, that's what they had pledged for! If they didn't do something in the name of their Fraternity, then what would they do to earn their spot?

Of course, he was just being selfish and biased considering he didn't want to clean. He'd done his fair share his freshman year and he vowed to never again do it. So far, he'd kept to that. Chizuru's grip tightened on Okita as he helped her down the few steps.

"I feel bad leaving without offering to help you clean up..." she mumbled, glancing over her shoulder to keep from looking at him.

"Don't worry about it." He reassured her, liking the fact that she was shy due to their closeness. And if she turned her face just a fraction, she would be a breath and head tilt away from a kiss. "That's what Heisuke is for."

Chizuru's eyes snapped back to his before she started to giggle. "That's...mean!" she scolded lightly. Okita shrugged as best as he could as he got them both to the bottom of the step. He hated that he had to let her go and once he set her gently on her feet, she started to pull away. "Thanks."

He nodded simply and watched as she took a sip of her water before letting him know she was ready to start moving. Purposely, Okita kept an even slow pace to keep Chizuru from trying to rush, but even so, she still paused longer between every couple steps. Her face scrunched up and he heard her hiss lowly every so often when she put too much weight on her foot.

"Ow, ow, oww..."

Okita glanced back at Chizuru again, whom quickly pressed her lips together to keep the 'ows' at bayâ€”until he turned away. He wasn't sure why she thought she was being quiet or sneaky, he was sure he'd be able to hear her even if he wasn't nearby.

Sure enough, when he turned away she started again. Shifting his weight he pivoted just quick enough to catch the last ow slip from her lips. She teetered slightly in shock but then pressed her lips together stubbornly.

Okita stopped and crossed his arms, "Have you always been this stubborn?" he asked.

Chizuru shrugged and huffed lightly, her injured foot tipped down in order to keep her heel from touching the ground. "I guess..." She adjusted the cap and sighed deeply. "What are our options, though? I can't just stay at the house..." Her eyes ducked down to her feet and he resisted the urge to tip her chin back upâ€”now that they were both out in the open, he had to watch himself more.

"Well, you could, but that's besides the point." Okita shifted and stepped up alongside her. "But this is our next best option." He knelt down and turned his back to her. "Come on."

Okita didn't have to glance back at her to know that she was hesitating. He could practically feel it and he spared a glance. "Pick your poisonâ€"I'm good with either." He flashed her a grin that she pointedly ignored, but she couldn't hide her smile from him.

He watched as she bent over and pulled the sweatpants up to her knees. When she caught his quizzical look, she gave him a small smile. "It'll probably be easier to grab my legs than the pants, right? Then you won't hit my ankle by accident." Okita nodded in agreement just as she leaned towards him and laid all her weight against his back. "You sure about this...?" she asked, her lips really close to his ears.

Okita loved the sensation and pushed the need to physically shake his head in order to clear his thoughts. She really didn't know what she did to him on a regular basis. "Yup." He answered simply as he held his arms out and ready to hold her legs.

She didn't say anything else as she wound her arms loosely around his neck and as she wrapped her bum leg around him first. Okita hooked his arm under her knee and managed not to hit her ankle, and did the same with her other leg when she finally wrapped it around him.

Okita didn't think it'd be so soon that he'd be that close to her legs again, although it was just from the knee down. He tried hard to keep his head steady and focused, the last thing he wanted was to let his mind start wandering while her legsâ€"and other partsâ€"were wrapped and pressed against him.

"Up we go." Okita slowly stood back up and he sighed heavily. "Damn, Chizu! What have you been eating?!"

Chizuru grunted and smacked his chest with her open palm. "That's not funny!" she told him, her tone light and amused. Okita adjusted her as gently as he could before he began walking them back to her dorm. The walk wasn't going to take long, he knew, but it wasn't exactly a morning without witnesses.

Honestly, he didn't think anyone on campus or around campus would even be up so early on a Sunday morning. It seemed like everyone was up and aroundâ€"jogging, getting coffee, walking home, etc. He tried hard not to show how bothered he was, for Chizuru's sake, at all their wandering eyes. Like they've never seen a man carry another person before...

That's because no one has seen or done that since Middle school, dip-shit. \_

He pursed his lips slightly, hating how snarky he was in the morning. He hadn't even had his first cup of coffee yet and he was in no mood for his own thoughts. He hoped that no one looked too closely at Chizuru and accidentally recognize her. Okita didn't care what people said about him, there was always something, but he wanted to spare Chizuru of that as much as possible.

Okita trailed from his thoughts when he felt Chizuru shift against his back. "Oh," She sighed and buried her face into the back of his shoulder, trying in vain to hide her blushing face. "This is \_so\_ embarrassing..."

Okita snorted and hiked her further up his back. "Embarrassing for \_you\_?! What about me?" Chizuru wasn't looking at him, so she couldn't see his smirk or amusement. "I'm the Big Bad Wolf on campus and here I am, carrying little red cross-dressing on\_ my\_ back. What will be said about \_my\_ reputation now?" he teased.

Chizuru laughed into his shoulder, sending warmth and small vibrations straight to his heart. He felt her shake her head, "Is that \_all\_ you're worried about?" She shifted again, which made Okita grip her legs tighter in response causing another delicious sensation to course between the two. If her stifled gasp was any indication on what she was feeling, then Okita was sure she felt that as strongly as he did too.

Chizuru pushed forward, her voice wobbling only slightly. "B-besides, if anything, it'll improve your image, right? You'll be known as the \_helping\_ Big Bad Wolf."

Okita chuckled, "\_Right.\_ Or, they'll probably think I beat you up for your lunch money and now I'm taking you to the hospital or something crazy like that."

Chizuru giggled and rested her chin on his shoulder, the bill of her hat peeking into Okita's peripherals and he was thankful for that distraction. It not only shielded her face from others, but also from him. It helped keep his thoughts on track. Especially when she spoke, as her mouth was right by his ear. She was so subtle in her actions, so innocent, and it was so hard for Okita. Literally.

"Well, they're wrong. All of them." She told him. "You're not so much the Big Bad Wolf, but...the Misunderstood Wolf. You have this front that others automatically see and can't see past it, sometimes even those close to you can't, but I have." Chizuru yawned and leaned her head back against his back. "At least, that's what I think..."

Okita had to force his legs to keep moving, but her words kept echoing back and forth in his head. He'd never heard such an \_honest\_ opinion of himself. In that moment, he knew, that she was it. She was quite possibly the real deal and that scared him on a whole new level. He never thought he'd ever meet someone that would make him think that. And what did one do when the girl you liked was in a relationship with an asshole?

Do you tell her what an asshole he's been? Do you tell her how you feel? Do you give her a choice? And what if she didn't chose him in the end?

\_You could just tell her that her boyfriend isâ€"\_

Okita shook his head lightly. No. This wasn't like the Underground where there were no rules to abide by and he didn't want to win Chizuru like that. He \_had\_ to wait, wait for her to come to that decision and wait for her to be ready for something else.

He decided it right then, with Chizuru practically falling asleep on

his back, that he'd wait for her for as long as he had to. Even if it killed him, which he was sure it would because he knew that it was going to be a very long time before he could start entertaining the idea of kissing her again.

Ugh. When did I become a saint?

\* \* \*

><p>"No, darling. You know exactly why you can't come back with me. Yes, yes. I know." Kazama shifted his cell phone to his other ear, resisting the urge to roll his eyes. An action like that was meant for private, not now while he was in the foyer of the Student Council house.<p>

"You know I'll make it up to you soon, precious. You know I wouldn't lie to you. Of course. Alright. Good-bye." Kazama quickly ended the call and shoved the phone in his pocket. Had it been any other weekend, of course he would've stayed much longer with whatever-her-name-was and actually enjoy their time together. But all he kept thinking about was the stupid Fraternity next door and their stupid party. Kazama was sure, without a doubt, that the party had gotten way out of hand, but then, his cell phone didn't go off once while he was away.

He scowled, feeling his features pinch. For the sake of those on the council and their position, he hoped they did everything he asked of them, or heads would roll. This was his—"their year to take down the Fraternity and the elusive Underground once and for all. Kazama would be damned if he let them get away with another year of illegal activities that gathered uneducated know-nothings like Souji Okita to their school and thusly, lowered their standards.

Once, back around the time his father was a student at the University, it was a prestigious school that held its own in integrity and value. The wait lists were miles long, entrance nearly impossible and extremely exclusive. One had to be the top of the top and *creme de la creme*. Great education program, ritzy background and grants, and now?

Well, the school was higher on the list of Party schools than it was on the Prestigious one. He sneered. His father, annually, made a generous donation to his Alma Mater...much to Kazama's distaste and protest, he hated knowing that his inheritance was essentially endorsing a party school. He might as well be handing Souji Okita and his damned Frat the money directly.

Kazama's eyes landed on his two right hand men, Amagiri and Shiranui, situated in almost the exact position he left them in the other night. His eyebrows automatically slammed down over his eyes, but neither seemed perturbed at his glare. He resisted the urge to roll his eyes and instead, took a seat in the empty chair closest to them. Amagiri, his ears of the council, shifted to face him.

"We've been on and off watch all last night. As requested." He blinked deep amber eyes at him and Kazama shifted his eyes to Shiranui, his muscle of the council, which if you looked at both of them you would definitely think the opposite.

Amagiri was built like a tank, tall, thick and bulky with muscle, but



absolutely detested anything to do with violence. He acted with words, but better than his communication skills, was his listening skills. Amagiri seemed to always hear everything anyone said about anything ever. Much to his big size, he had a quiet presence, and that was his stealth.

Shiranui, on the other hand, was anything but quiet. He was the one you went to, to get things done. Shiranui was a man of action, often times brutal, and always sly. The only thing Kazama had trouble with when it came to him was his big mouth, Shiranui liked to talkâ€”loudly. But even with them both being exceptionally skilled, they still hadn't been able to take them down next door. It was aggravating how they were always able to slip from their grasps...

"What's the status?" he asked, already preparing to hear the worst. "I'm assuming that we got nothing of value?"

Shiranui shrugged, and let his chin fall into his open palm. Of course he had the audacity to look bored. "Just the usual stuff," he shifted and gave him a smirk, "Pretty huge turn out, but as usual, they shut it down before it got too wild. Seems like they're being extra cautious." Shiranui shot a knowing look to Amagiri. A look that purposely didn't go missed by Kazama.

He tried to hide his smile as he leaned forward, "What?" he asked.

Amagiri took over the conversation, "That roommate of your girlfriend was in attendance, with a girl who looked like her, but we couldn't be too sure."

Kazama pursed his lips, his mind working into overdrive. What had Chizuru said she was doing the other day? He wouldn't put it past her roommate to go to the party, but Chizuru? No, there was no way she'd do that. Parties weren't her thing and going to a party hosted by Okita?

No, she wouldn't directly disobey him...but then again, she was getting more disobedient and...unruly than before. He frowned and pushed up from his chair. "What'd she look like?" he asked, his mind still working.

Shiranui spoke, "Great pair of legs, short dress, curly hair." he crossed his arms in a thoughtful pose. "Man, I've seen your girlfriend and no offense, but other than the hair color and shape of the face, she didn't really resemble her. I mean, this girl was hot. A solid 9."

Kazama shrugged. He knew that Chizuru was cute, but compared to most of the other girls at the school, well, she was about average. "Chizuru doesn't own short dresses either...but that could've easily been borrowed or bought." He was thinking to himself out loud as he began to pace. Kazama couldn't help but feel uncontrollable rage over the thought of Chizuru possibly attending the party. What the hell?

"And you two think that if it is her, she could've let them know that we were on to them?" He straightened slightly, eyebrows knitting down in thought. He had let Chizuru know that he was going to take

them down, but that wasn't news to them. The Fraternity was always suspicious of them and they never hide the fact that that's what he wanted to do.

Even with Chizuru's 'help' she didn't have much power to help them. He pursed his lips, he was sure that someone higher up was helping them out but he couldn't prove that. Kazama glanced up at his two comrades. He hadn't shared that thought with them yet, mostly because he wanted more proof of the matter and he wanted to be the one to come across it. There was no victory if Amagiri or Shiranui found it.

"Interesting. What else?" he asked.

Amagiri shook his head, "Nothing else of importance." He pushed himself to his feet and stepped towards the window that held the best view of the building next to them. "The house is still quiet."

Shiranui popped to his feet, already at the window just as Amagiri stepped away. "Ah, you spoke too soon, Amagiri." He glanced over his shoulder, giving them both a wide grin. "Looks like we have some stragglers from last night."

Shiranui glanced back out the window, grimacing when his eyes landed on Souji Okita—the scourge of the Fraternity next door, next to the pain in the ass Sanosuke. Actually, they were all a pain in his ass considering how Kazama constantly rode them all at the Student Council about them. He hated how critical Kazama was about the Fraternity, but hey, it gave him something to do rather than the boring Student Council business.

His eyes swooped from Okita to another, rather petite, looking person. Their frame was indistinguishable with the sweats they had on, with a baseball cap pulled low over their head. It made him curious, but only slightly, immediately putting the thought away. The Fraternity had quite a few pledges, most weren't scrawny like this one, but then again he couldn't remember them all.

"Eh, it's just Okita and some pledge...or something." Shiranui pushed away from the window and shrugged.

Kazama rolled his eyes, "Heisuke?" he asked, tone flat and bored. At this point, he was just making conversation—his mind still churning with thoughts.

Shiranui only shrugged in response and Kazama walked towards the window. Back when he got on the board for the Student Council, he had made the room they were in a work-study room for them—solely for the fact that the large window faced the Frat. Kazama found it inspiring to be able to see them constantly, it fueled his hatred and made him work harder to get rid of them.

His eyes easily landed on Okita, who was tall and recognizable, unlike the other one. Kazama stared intently. Sure, he really couldn't make out the person in the baggie clothes or cap, but he seemed familiar. Kazama wasn't sure what it was about 'em that made 'em familiar, but it was there. The person was tiny looking, even for Heisuke's size, petite and almost homely looking.

Immediately, Kazama knew that it wasn't Heisuke at all. Intrigued, he found himself squinting harder as he pressed his face closer to the glass. At this moment, Okita paused to let the little guy limp towards him, before they stopped and Okita walked back to him.

\_So whoever that is, they're injured enough to limp. Okay.\_ Kazama watched as Okita knelt down in front of the injured person, the injured one hesitated before bending over to adjust their pant leg. Instantly, Kazama recognized the person and all it took was a view of said person's ass to know.

It didn't matter how many layers of clothes, or how baggy they seemed to be. When they bent over, the material stretch perfectly across their bottom and gave nothing to the imagination. Kazama knew that ass anywhere, as it was Chizuru's most redeemable feature—admittedly, he was an ass man. With a sharp intake of air, he straightened up and away from the window.

\_What the fuck? \_

Kazama shut his eyes and took a deep breath before leaning forward and looking out at them again. Now, Chizuru was being piggy-backed by Okita—his sworn enemy, the one he blatantly told Chizuru to stay away from—and was probably headed back to her dorm. But now the question was, why? Why was she talking to him? Why did she go to the party? And why, did she stay the night with him?

He easily felt his anger start to rise in a way that he hadn't experienced in a long, long time. Honestly, Kazama wasn't sure what to make of it, but he knew he didn't like how...possessive he suddenly felt. He turned towards the two and gave them a solemn look, one that they seemed to understand more than anything else.

"I'm going to take care of this," He told them, his voice surprisingly level. "And I need your cooperation to see it through..."

\_This ends today.\_

\* \* \*

><p>Chizuru opened her eyes and stared at her boring white ceiling for what seemed like hours before things started to slowly trickle back to her. With a gasp, she shot up in bed and instantly regretted the quick movement. Her head spun and she felt violently ill for it.<p>

"Here!"

Chizuru couldn't even make out the voice before a garbage can was shoved in her face. She scrunched up her face and pushed the can away from her face, automatically plugging her nose to keep from smelling it. "I'm fine." She choked out. Chizuru didn't feel like throwing up, she just sat up too quickly.

The dizziness faded and she dropped her hand from her nose. She glanced over at a wide eyed Sen, her expression slightly pinched. She lowered the garbage can when she was sure that Chizuru wasn't going to start puking and settled on the bed beside her.

"Okita wasn't kidding..." she mumbled and Chizuru glanced at her with curiosity.

"What?" she asked, her voice wobbling slightly.

Sen shrugged, "Okita said you had one too many last night," She frowned and leaned towards her, "I'm sorry about last night, Chizuru. I had no idea you had that much! I never would've left with that guy if I had any idea andâ€"

Chizuru shook her head and reached out towards her. "It's fine, Sen. I wasn't really willing to say how inexperienced I was out loud to anyone. Don't feel bad. And you shouldn't stop living your life just to take care of me. I'm glad you had fun." In the end, it worked out. What would Chizuru have done if she knew what really happened? If Sen had accidentally witnessed it?

Speaking of...

Sen smiled at her and she shifted, "How are you feeling otherwise?" she asked.

"Not as sick as I thought I would be. I'm just extremely dizzy." She reached as slowly as she could to her night stand where her water bottle was at. Her eyes caught the baseball cap she wore and she sighed softly. "Did, uh, Okita say anything before he left?"

"Not much. Just that you got sick all over your dress early this morning so he gave you some of his spare clothes." Sen smiled knowingly and Chizuru turned her attention to her water bottle. Was she that transparent? "Who said chivalry was dead?"

Chizuru couldn't help but smile, "He was just helping me out 'cause of my ankle." For emphasis, she slowly raised her ankle that was wrapped. Sen winced slightly and scooted closer to the edge of the bed to avoid accidentally hitting it.

"Guess you had quite a night then, huh?" Sen smiled and pushed herself off the bed. "It was quite a sight, actually. Okita and Heisuke came up to our room, you were just out on his backâ€"you hung on surprisingly well!"

"I don't really remember falling asleep," She pushed her bangs from her face and sighed again. "I didn't get a chance to actually thank him..."

Sen chuckled lightly, "Oh, I'm sure he knows, Chizuru." She turned back towards her, "Did you at least get to enjoy the party?"

Chizuru nodded and she paused for a moment as a particular image from last night popped into her head. Slow dancing with Okitaâ€"more so, begging him to dance with her and then holding his hand. She felt her face start to heat up and she quickly pressed her open palms against them. "Um, yeah." She heard herself mumble, hoping that Sen didn't notice the blush, but she knew that was asking for too much.

Sen's eyebrows quirked and she gave her a slow grin, "What's got you blushing, Chizuru?" she asked playfully. "Did you confess or something?" Sen's eyes widened and her grin stretched. "Did he?!\_"

\_What...? Where did she get that idea?\_ Chizuru gaped at her friend and she snapped her mouth shut, mentally she was screaming at her heart to stop it's frantic beating. "Erâ€"no! I, it wasâ€"nothing. I'm just...embarrassed. Besides, you know he knows that I have a boyfriend and w-why would \_I\_ confess?" Chizuru couldn't seem to stop stammering, which really wasn't helping her out or coming off as convincing.

Sen watched Chizuru quietly for a moment before she lifted her hands up in a 'I surrender' pose. "When you're ready to talk about it, I'm here to listen." Sen winked at her and grabbed her shower kit. "Make sure to drink lots of fluids, okay? I'll be back in a bit."

Chizuru silently watched as Sen waved and walked out of their dorm, as if she didn't just shock her or say what she did. She felt her stomach start to turn and she squirmed in place. How much did she know? How much was obvious? Chizuru sighed and laid back down on her bed. She'd talk to her soon, like maybe after a nap. Or...after she did homework...or maybe in a week or so.

She didn't hear any warning bells start going off in her head at the thought of talking to her, so that had to be good, right? Chizuru also knew that she \_had\_ to talk to someone about it soon or she would end up blurting it to Kazama without grace. Something like that couldn't be brought up so callously. Chizuru groaned and covered her face with her comforter.

\_Sleep first. Problems later.\_

\* \* \*

><p>Okita stifled a yawn and opted to take a drink of his coffee. The drink did it's trick to warm up his insides and jolt his body with a buzz of caffeine. <em>That hit the spot.<em> He sighed and ignored the probing stare Heisuke was \_still\_ giving him. Fifteen minutes and counting of solid staring and small \_tsking\_ noises. Okita was pretty close to decking him, just to be rid of the pest for a couple moments.

From the moment Okita called Heisuke to open the door to Chizuru's dorm building, he'd been all weird and questioning. Like he'd never given a piggy back ride to a girl cross-dressed as a guy to avoid suspicion and then fell asleep! Okita shook his head, so maybe it \_was\_ weird and he'd be curious too if he were in Heisuke's shoes. Who wouldn't?

But he really didn't want to have to explain it to Heisuke, he didn't want to explain it to Sen either, but she wasn't going to let him just leave without answers. So, in the end, he gave her a summarized version of their morning. Summarized as in without mentioning the...kiss they shared. That was for Chizuru to decide, but he was sure she didn't want it being talked about.

Heisuke glared over his own coffee cup, "Are you going to say \_anything?\_" he asked, eyebrows quirked.

Okita glanced at him with slightly wide eyes, "About what?" he asked innocently. Like there was anyway he would divulge any information about what \_really\_ happened. It didn't matter that he trusted

Heisuke, despite all the shit he gave him. Okita trusted every single brother he had in the Fraternity, but it was between him and Chizuru—or rather, between Chizuru, him and whoever she wanted to tell. It was like he said before, he didn't care what others said about him...but when it came to Chizuru, well, that was a different story.

"Don't act coy, you bastard!" Heisuke shifted so he walked backwards, opting to face Okita instead. "Were you going to let any of us know that Chizuru spent the night...with you?"

"It wasn't like that." Okita waved him off and shrugged. "She passed out after having one too many—no thanks to Shinpachi—and she slept it off in my bed. I was no where near her."

Heisuke seemed skeptical, but he nodded slowly anyway. Okita was a good liar, not that he was proud to say that, but it was a good skill for certain situations. "And why were you carrying her? And why was she dressed like that?" he asked, turning back around.

Okita sighed, "You're awfully alert and curious this morning..." He mumbled, "Chizuru hurt her ankle, she said she fell off the bed or something, and she didn't want to be recognized leaving the house in her party dress from the night before." He gave Heisuke a look, "Something about not wanting others to assume the worst."

Heisuke blushed lightly and he ducked his head quickly. Okita hid his smirk by taking another drink of his coffee. He knew it was wrong to make Heisuke feel guilty for jumping to conclusions, considering how untrue he actually probably was, but it was better that way. How else did someone explain what happened between the two without someone pointing fingers? Okita took all responsibility for what happened—as horribly great as it was, in his opinion.

"Right." Heisuke took a small drink of his coffee-latte-something. "Do the other guys know?"

Okita shook his head, "No. They were all still sleeping when we left. I'm sure they'll hear about it. The sight of me carrying her was pretty ridiculous."

"If worse comes to worse, I'll just say you were carrying me." Heisuke grimaced, but pushed it off with a shrug. "I mean, Chizuru and I are basically the same size."

"Well, she's tinier and lighter than you are, I'm sure. Not to mention grateful."

Heisuke rolled his eyes, "Don't be an ass," he nudged him with his elbow, "But I am sorry for assuming. Seeing you with her on your back like that, well, it does raise questions as to what could've happened." Heisuke tipped his head back to glance at Okita. "Chizuru's cute. I'm not blind, neither are the guys, and I just hope you're aware of your own intentions."

Too late.

"I know." Okita shook his head, "And when did you start getting all serious, douche?"

"Since no one at the Fraternity seems to act serious enough" except for Saito, but the odds are against him."

Okita playfully shoved Heisuke, "You're hilarious, Heisuke. I'll remember that." As they reached the front porch of the House, they both came to a dead stop when they noticed someone leaning against the door.

Blonde hair and dark eyes pulled into a narrowed glare that was typically reserved for Okita "yeah." "Kazama, what a pleasant surprise." Okita's tone was dry and hollow sounding as he spoke.

Kazama pushed from the door and walked towards them. "Good, you're here. We need to have a talk." He walked down the stairs and stopped in front of him. Kazama wore a forced grin, one that reminded Okita of a snake.

"About?" he asked, taking a sip of his coffee and pushing his glance elsewhere. He knew he'd lose his temper if he kept looking at Kazama's constantly smug looking face. So many thoughts flew through his mind when he looked at him. Like how undeserving he was of Chizuru, or how smug he was because he was rich and the Student Council President. Or even how he was constantly trying to take down his Fraternity.

What was his deal?

Kazama's eyes skipped over to Heisuke and he let his smile slip. "\_Alone.\_"

Heisuke stepped closer to Kazama, his eyes angry. "Dude, fuck you. You really think I'm going to leave \_you\_ alone with Okita?"

Okita smirked, "It's fine, Heisuke. I can handle it."

Heisuke glanced back at him and then back to Kazama, his anger subsiding slightly. "I know that. That's not what I'm worried about." He straightened and glared one final time at Kazama. "Don't try anything funny. We'll be watching."

Kazama ignored him and Heisuke left. Okita watched him go, giving a firm nod when he hesitated by the door before entering. Okita appreciated the gesture. He turned back to glance at Kazama, feeling himself get angry all over again.

"Alright. We're alone now. What do you want?" he asked curtly. Okita couldn't imagine Kazama having anything worthwhile to say.

Kazama crossed his arms and he tipped his head up slightly, the gesture came off as arrogant and Okita fought the urge to shove him. Okita didn't miss the way his eyes hardened and he couldn't stop the smirk.

\_There you are, you bastard.\_ He was wondering when he'd let that final arrogant wall fall and he'd let him see the true depth in his eyes. Malice. Mean. Cold. These were the things that churned inside of Kazama in an abundance, he could see that easily in his eyes.

"I know about Chizuru." He finally said. "I know of her...involvement

with you and her involvement with your Fraternity." Kazama sneered and his hands clutched into tight fists. "So I'm only going to say this once, so listen closely."

Okita tipped his head to the side, now curious about what he was going to say but trying not to seem like he was. Honestly, he was ready to jump the bastard and yell at him to hurry up and spit it out.

Kazama stepped closer to Okita and lowered his voice, "Stay the fuck away from Chizuru."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>an: And so ends another chapter! :) Thanks, as always, for reading! Don't forget to, please, revieeew! Good, bad, meh, I like reading it all! See ya next time! \*\*

## 11. Affirmation Pt 1

\_OkitaXChizuru. Romance.\_

\*\*A/N: Here we are again! And as a gift to all my wonderful readers, \_two\_ chapter updates! :D \*\*

\*\*And to \_Guest Too\_, whoever you are, thank you for the very awesome review! You are not at all too opinionated, and even if you are, I like it! It's refreshing! :) I wish I could send you a personal IM so I can gush and thank you some more, but alas, you are anonymous! So instead, I shall dedicate this chapter to you! \*\*

\*\*Enjoy.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Crazy<strong>

\*\*Chapter 11: Affirmation Pt. 1\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><em>Stay the fuck away from Chizuru.<em>

Well that was...unexpected. So much so , that Okita actually started to laugh. The kind of laugh that shook his whole body and nearly caused tears in his eyes, the request was just hilarious to him. Where in the hell did Kazama think he had to right to ask him of that? Or to make Chizuru's decisions for her? Yeah, Kazama should feel threatened of his friendship with Chizuru, but \_he\_ was actually being respectful (to the best of his ability) despite the circumstance.

"Will that be all, your highness?" Okita gave a mocking bow and shook his head, biting his tongue to keep from laughing again. "Man, I \_knew\_ you were mad with power over at that Student Council house, but really? What makes you think I'll fucking listen to \_you\_, of all people? Or that you can boss me around like that, uh?" Really, what was this guy thinking?



Kazama's eyes flashed angrily, but he seemed to hold it together pretty well. Okita would've given just about anything for Kazama to lose it in front of him. He wanted a reason to lay it out on him, his fist was twitching for the opportune moment. His adrenaline seemed to spike with the mere thought. He wasn't so lucky.

"Laugh all you want, Okita. Go ahead, get it out of your system if you have to." Kazama narrowed his eyes at him, "But I'm very serious about this. And I just happen to know the one weakness you may not even know you have..."

That caught Okita's attention. Years of masked indifference helped Okita from giving anything away, even as his insides churned. But despite his cool, stoic expression, his hands automatically clenched into hard fists, his knuckles cracking, and nails biting into his palms as they shook with pent up energy.

Don't say her name. Don't say her name!\_ He chanted over and over. Okita hoped that Kazama wasn't that observant. Hoped that Kazama was just being full of it. He was carefulâ€"they both were careful, if for different reasons. "Eh? Do you now?"

Kazama smirked, making Okita's blood run cold. "Chizuru." His eyes shot to Okita's eyes and Kazama's smile widened at the tiniest break in Okita's eyes. That was all Kazama needed to see to know. He was getting soft, normally, he would've been able to brush off whatever Kazama would've said. Would've denied it tooth and nail, but he was in too deep. This time, it was Kazama who chuckled, "So I guess you were aware of your own weakness."

Fuck composure. Angrily, Okita took a step towards him, his fists already raising to where he had visualized decking him over a thousand times, but instantly Kazama's features darkened and he lifted his hand up to stop him.

Surprisingly, Okita was able to hold himself back, but Kazama's palm against his chest was practically burning a hole in his shirt. Slowly he lowered his trembling fists and instead glared down at him. This was the most emotion he'd ever given the man and it was burning him inside. Okita was sure that he was close to chipping away a few of his teeth with the way he was grinding them together, but the gesture was some what soothing.

"Oh, I'm not quite finished yet, Okita." Kazama dropped his hand and tilted his head to the side in a very condescending way. "You see, if you don't keep your distanceâ€"like I mentioned beforehandâ€"well, I'll just let it 'leak' to my many sources that Chizuru Yukimura is deeply involved with the Fraternity and the Underground. You see, you know more than anyone else that all I need is one person to go down for this whole thing and bam! You guys have another strike against you, you have others knowing a way to get to you, and I know that you won't fight if Chizuru's in constant danger! Then, well, I can just sit back and watch you and the Underground crumble. How can it go on without it's prized fighter? I'll get all I want." He shrugged and stepped away from him. "But you know that's not how it has to be. You stay away, she can continue listening to me and dating me and she'll be safe. Your choice."

Okita couldn't believe what he was hearing. Everything he had feared earlier was practically being shoved down his throat by the very guy

he hated with every fiber of his being. Just when things were turning up, he got pulled way back down. He ran both hands through his hair as he let out a slow, somewhat calming breathe. How in the hell was he going to handle this? Was he seriously debating it?

\_You know what you have to do! You know this bastard isn't lying. He just wants to win, no matter who falls in his way. \_

Okita glared hard at him, "Fine." He spat, "I'll stay away from Chizuru."

Kazama smirked at him, his eyes sparkled with malicious glee. "I just knew you would see it my way." He started to walk past him but then paused when they were shoulder to shoulder. Kazama lowered his voice again, "Oh, and her disguise wasn't fooling \_anyone\_ this morning. I sincerely hope you got a good enough taste of her last night but\_ knowing\_ her like \_I\_ do, I doubt it. But I get it. Curiosity. Oh well, that's what all the others are for, right?" Kazama laughed as he continued walking away.

\_He doesn't even fucking care about her! This is just a game to him! She's just a possession! \_

Something inside him just snapped. Okita didn't even realize he lunged for Kazama until he felt arms holding him back. All he saw was red, anger pouring out of him in waves, Kazama's body growing smaller and smaller as he walked away from him. He never wanted to make him bleed and hurt as much as he did in that moment. Okita pushed and pulled at the arms holding him back with all his strength. Twice he actually managed to slip from their hold, but was only knocked right back into their hold.

"Let me go!" he gritted. Okita could taste blood in his mouth, probably from when he bite down to keep from yelling out curse words, which in the end he shouted them anyway. "Fucking let me \_get\_ him!"

"You need to calm down first!"

"Let me \_go\_!"

"If you don't stop and calm down we'll have toâ€œ"

Okita struggled harder again, Kazama's laugh was still echoing back and forth in his head. His comment about Chizuru...it was too much! He didn't care if anyone called him a pawn or whatever, he was what he was. But her? No. He shook his head and grunted in frustration.

"FUCKING LET ME \_GO\_!" He bellowed as he kicked out. If he ran right now, he could still get Kazama. Even if he got into the house, he'd kick the door in and charge. The man was \_not\_ going to get away with it and \_he\_ \_wasn't\_ going to stay away from Chizuru! There was no way in hell he'd let her continue staying with that man.

"\_Do\_ it already!"

"Okita, sorry, about thisâ€œ"

The voices were shouting over him and just when he thought he was

free, he felt pain flared to the side of his face and he blacked out for just a brief moment. \_What the fuck...?\_

"\_Ouch\_â€"shit!"

"Okita? You okay, man?"

"What the hell are you asking \_him \_for, Sano? \_I'm\_ the one who decked him!"

"Heisuke, quit your whining! If you had punched him \_properly\_ then your fist wouldn't be hurting!"

"That's the stupidestâ€"!"

Okita blinked the stars from his eyes and his hand lifted up to touch his cheek. He slowly glanced around him, finally noticing his Fraternity brothers by him. The red was gone from his vision, his adrenaline high had faded and his face was hurting something fierce. Heisuke had a mean right hook.

"Thumb shouldn't be tucked into the fist, stupid." He heard himself muttered softly. Calmly, he took a deep breathe that shuddered through his entire body.

Shinpachi, who had his arms still locked around Okita, slowly let go. "You good?" he asked, a little skeptical.

Okita nodded, "Yeah. Thanks." He rubbed at his cheek again, "Sorry." He mumbled to them all. He was sure that Heisuke, Shinpachi, Sanosuke and Saito had \_all \_held him back just thenâ€"just one of them wouldn't have been enough. Not with the way he was thrashing about and from the adrenaline that spiked through him. He wasn't sure much could've stopped him and that could've ended very badly for them, namely him.

Reaching up, he laced his hands together and laid them behind his neck as he took another deep breathe. In through his nose, out through his mouth like he did to calm himself after a fight. He needed to keep a level head, but his mind kept going to that dark and crazy place in the back of his mind. His main plan still involved kicking in the Student Council door and taking out Kazama. Maybe give him a shiner that'd be a constant reminder as punishment or knock out a tooth to ruin his stupid-ass smile.

Heisuke shook out his right hand and with his left began to massage it. "Damn man, I don't know how you enjoy doing that." He gave him a smirk but Okita didn't return it. He was still too wound up.

"You're lucky you didn't break your thumb. You need to learn to punch correctly. Have Saito show you." Okita turned away and he noticed all of them shift uneasily, their eyes glued to his every movement. He was sure they thought he'd make a break for next doorâ€"not that he hadn't already thought of it. But then what? Have Chizuru be mad at him for breaking her boyfriend's pretty face? Risk having her name thrown into their business just because Kazama was feeling spiteful? He knew that if he did that, Okita would tell them the truth.

The truth that\_ he\_ was the name and face for the Underground. Their

secret weapon. Okita knew that Kazama figured out that he'd do that to save Chizuru—probably even hoped he would. How else would he explain his last comment? It all played out perfectly for Kazama either way. All the options, all the ending factors, were in his favor.

He glared at his friends, scowled, really. "I'm not going to do anything stupid." He growled and continued up the stairs. "I \_can't\_." The last he mumbled more to himself than to the others.

Sanosuke nodded, "We were just being prepared. We didn't think you'd ever try to actually assault the Student Council President in broad daylight either but...well, things happen."

Shinpachi huffed, skipping the first few porch steps as he climbed up. "What did that prick \_say\_ to get you so pissed anyway?" he asked.

Okita shrugged, not wanting to think of it and definitely not wanting to repeat it. Repeating it out loud only proved that it was real. He didn't want to believe that just yet. There had to be another way that wouldn't expose them and hurt Chizuru. "Stupid shit." He answered, purposely being vague. Shinpachi rolled his eyes and scoffed.

Heisuke grunted in annoyance, "You know that we're on \_your\_ side, right?" He followed Okita into the living room and shoved at the empty cans on the sofa before seating himself. "I mean, if I hadn't mentioned to the others that you were outside talking to Kazama, they might not have had my back when you were about to jump him! We could've been having this discussion downtown at the police station instead."

Saito nodded, his eyes stern and hard on Okita. "What you almost did would've had major repercussions on not just \_you\_, but \_all\_ of us." He straightened and shook his head. "You need better control of that anger of yours."

Okita dropped his head into his hands and gripped his hair in frustration. "I \_know\_ that. I also know that all of you guys ganging up on me like this is just unfair." No one cracked a smile at his comment or even gave him a pity laugh. Okita sighed a short harsh breath and glanced at Sanosuke. "I need another fight. Soon."

Sanosuke stared at him for a long beat before finally pulling out his phone, "I was actually already lining something up for you since that party set us back a little. How soon?" he asked, not bothering to lift his gaze.

"Like yesterday."

"Right." Sanosuke tapped away at his phone before he gave him a firm nod. "It's set. Tuesday night. Location will be settled. Be there."

Like there was any other place he'd be.

Heisuke shifted his gaze and rolled his eyes, "Am I the only one not

okay with the fact that he changed the subject on us?"

They all turned and looked at Okita in question. He leaned forward and grabbed a used cup before he spit into it. Sure enough, blood. He could easily taste it now that the throbbing had subsided. The punch he was dealt and having bit down from earlier was more likely the cause of it. "He told me to stay away from Chizuru." He mumbled before spitting once more into the cup.

Sanosuke tsked and shook his head, "And?" he asked.

Okita snapped his gaze to him, "And \_what?\_"

"\_And \_what else?" Sanosuke gave him a patronizing look, "I don't believe you flew off the handle just like that because he demanded you stay away from her."

"He's right. You may have a short fuse, but not \_that\_ short." Heisuke added.

Okita stayed quiet and glanced down at the coffee table, his eyes taking in all the empty cups, cans and bottles from last night. Strangely, that all seemed like days ago rather than hours. Shinpachi leaned forward, his elbows resting on his knees.

"Listen, you may not believe it and we may not have known her for long, but Chizuru is our friend now too. None of us like the fact that she's with that cheating, lying bastard anymore than you do. She means a lot to us, mostly because of how much she means to you."

\_Damn. When have they been able to see me so clearly? \_Okita's first thoughts went back to what Chizuru had said earlier. About how he was misunderstood. He felt a warmth of pride swell inside him, but unfortunately it wasn't enough to shake him from his mood.

Normally, he wasn't one to share. But this was different. There was more to it than just him and Chizuru. He didn't like that he had to tell them what was going on, but they were a Fraternity—a brotherhood and he knew he could count on them. How else had they prevailed over the Student Council before?

"He threatened that if I didn't keep my distance he'd tell anyone and everyone who would listen of her involvement with us and the Underground." He lifted his eyes and leveled them all with his gaze. "He only needs one to take the fall for us and he knows that I would never let that happen..."

Sanosuke nodded, "He knew \_you'd\_ take the fall in \_her\_ place."

"And he'd finally take down the Underground and us." Heisuke shook his head, his eyebrows furrowing. "Damn that bastard!"

"But what \_really\_ pissed me off, what \_really\_ sent me over the edge, was right before he left he made a fucking derogatory joke at Chizuru's sake. Like this \_whole thing\_ was nothing more than a fucking \_game\_ to him. She's just a useless pawn! He doesn't \_care\_ about her, he just sees her as a thing that he currently owns and would rather \_ruin\_ than see happy with someone else." Okita knew he

shared a little more than he had to, but once he got going, he couldn't help but blurt it out. Thinking about the whole thing and talking about it was getting him riled up again and he shook his head. "I swear to you all, if I get the chance, I'll kill him."

\_Breathe in, breathe out. \_

"Politics." Saito shook his head, "He plays dirty and nothing else matters."

Heisuke frowned, "So...what are you going to do?" he asked.

Okita leaned back in his chair, "Exactly what he told me to." He grimaced, hating what he was about to say. "I'm going to stay away from her."

With all his might, he hated that he was letting Kazama win and letting Chizuru go.

\* \* \*

><p><em>Okita! <em>

\_No matter how hard Chizuru called after him, he kept moving further and further away. She could feel her throat start to burn and ache from her continued yells, but it didn't seem to matter how loud she got. He never once turned to her calls, never noticed how she was running after him, desperately trying to catch up to him. \_

\_She fell. \_

\_Pain flared up her legs, stomach, and arms that skid across the flat, hard ground. The palms of her hands were burning again, like it did the night Okita saved her. Chizuru wrapped her arms around her before she turned to lay on her back. She continued to call for him, her voice growing hoarse the more she kept up. \_

\_Why was he ignoring her? Why was he leaving her behind? \_

\_Pain soon gave way to a sinking feeling that felt like lead in her stomach and limbs. Despair was clawing at her insides and before she realized it, she was crying as the feeling began to overwhelm her.

\_

\_Okita...\_

Chizuru opened her eyes wide and blinked away the tears that was left over from her bizarre dream. Her skin felt warm and was slick with sweat, the way she would normally be after a nightmare but she wasn't quite sure that's what she wanted to call it.

Sure it was upsetting and her heart was beating wildly in her chest like she was scared. So maybe calling it a bad dream was better? Reaching up she pushed her hair from her face and took a deep breathe in an attempt to calm herself down. It worked, even if just a little bit.

Chizuru rolled over gently and pulled her cellphone from underneath her pillow. She had a missed text from Sen letting her know that she

went out for lunch with a friendâ€”one she just had to meetâ€”as was stated in her text, and not to worry about her. Checking the time, Chizuru realized she had slept for a good chunk of the day, but thankfully her head was no longer pounding.

Taking that as a good sign, she gently tested her ankle, which thankfully wasn't hurting her as bad as it was earlier. Chizuru unwrapped her ankle, gathered her shower kit and headed to the showers to wash away last night.

Her hair was still in tangles, make up was still caked on, and she was sure she didn't smell all too great either. After that, she'd tackle whatever else she needed to do, which she was sort of dreading. Really, she felt lazy, of all things, and that was something she hardly ever felt.

She kind of liked the feeling. Chizuru just wanted to let the rest of the day pan out and then worry about tomorrow when it rolled around. She smiled at herself. Well, why not?

The shower was great and worked it's magic on her. Her hair was practically singing it's praises at finally being tangle free, shampooed and conditioned. Her face felt squeaky clean and fresh and she had the scent of Wild berries, thanks to her body wash.

Loving the refreshing feeling her body felt after the warm shower, she practically skipped, or rather hopped on her good foot, back to her dorm room with glee. She wasn't sure what was with the sudden burst of energy, or emotion, considering a few minutes ago she was perfectly content with wasting the rest of the day doing nothing, but she wasn't complaining. She just felt...good. Chizuru couldn't wait to get back to her dorm so she could text Okita, she still had to thank him for carrying her back.

Chizuru stopped short, her eyes widening when she spotted Kazama standing outside her dorm room. She froze, her good feelings fleeing instantly and filling her with anxiety. What was he doing there? Did he know? A million other thoughts flew through her mind and she wasn't sure her legs would support her weight for much longer if she just stood there gawking.

Kazama shifted his glance, when he spotted her he lowered his cellphone from his ear and gave her a smile. He pocketed his phone and she forced herself to move forward. "Erâ€”Kazama, hey!" She greeted lamely, suddenly very aware that she was in her bathrobe with only a towel underneath and slippers. It wasn't like he hadn't seen her in less, but she felt...self-conscious suddenly. In some ways, she felt like Kazama didn't know her that intimately anymore.

His eyes dipped momentarily but he politely moved his eyes back up to her face. "Hey, I was just calling you." Kazama gently bent down and kissed her forehead in greeting. "Figured you were probably hungry, if you're free?"

Chizuru's immediate response was to decline. She wasn't sure she should continue on without saying something to Kazama first, but was that wise? And where would she start? 'So I kissed someone else last night, surprise! Oh, and I'm pretty sure I'm in love with him too. Also! He's the guy you told me to stay away from!' Yeah, that did

not sound ideal. Chizuru instantly regretted not taking Sen's offer earlier to talk about it, but who knew he'd be so spontaneous?

"You don't have any Student Council business tonight?" she asked, hoping that maybe he'd just forgottenâ€"not that he ever \_would\_â€"but it was wishful thinking on her end.

Kazama shook his head, his hands tracing up and down her arm. He lowered his head slightly, "Is your roommate in?" he asked, eyes sparking slightly in a way that seemed to baffle Chizuru. She'd never seen that look before on him before. Others, yes, but him? No. Not even in their most private of moments. "We can, \_you know\_, kill some time before grabbing an early dinner..."

Chizuru felt her face burn with the suggestion as she automatically backed up into her closed door and out of his touch.

"Uhâ€"actually\_, Sen will be right back! She just went to put her laundry in the wash, so, really...uhh, maybe next time?" Kazama's face fell slightly and she purposely ignored it by turning away.

She fumbled with the door handle and her Student ID card that let her in. She nervously gave him a smile, "I'll be right out so we can go! Okay?" Chizuru didn't give him a chance to suggest anything else or even a chance to follow her, if he tried. Quickly, she slammed the door on him and leaned against it.

Chizuru buried her head in her open hands and sighed as quietly as she could. \_What was that about?\_ She thought curiously.

Her heart was beating like crazy again, but not for the right reasons. She was nervous and a little thrown off. The most accurate word was probably intimidated. Kazama was never so...\_forward\_ like that and it actually creeped her out. Chizuru never would have thought he'd ask to have \_sex\_ in her \_dorm\_ with even the \_slightest\_ possibility that her roommate could come back at any time!

Kazama was always a calculated man, the kind who had specific underwear for every day of the week, the kind that liked his privacy and typically had a schedule when it came to one on one time between them. And it was \_always\_ at his place because he had his \_own\_ room. Though she was sure that even if she did have her own dorm, it'd still always be at his place. Kazama liked to know that he didn't have to be rushed when in the act and he liked to be in control of all of it, etc.

Chizuru squeezed her eyes tightly. She couldn't even \_remember\_ the last time they did it or even made plans to. Theyâ€"well \_he\_â€"was always so busy and it wasn't something she constantly badgered him about. Sure, it was beautiful when it happened, but it wasn't anything incredibly \_exciting\_.

And \_now\_?

Well, she was still baffled. Chizuru shook her head. Maybe he was especially, for lack of a better word, \_needy\_? It had been a while...The idea had Chizuru's stomach swirling. She wasn't sure she could do that with him again. Not with everything that was going on and \_certainly not\_ with her feelings elsewhere. That wasn't right.



Quietly, she hurried around her dorm as best as she could without putting even more weight on her bad ankle and got dressed. She really hoped that it wasn't going to keep coming up 'cause she really wasn't sure how to tackle the problem. \_This is just an early dinner.\_ She told herself over and over in order to calm herself down.

A couple minutes later, she pushed the thoughts out of her mindâ€”\_all\_ of themâ€”and exited her dorm. She smiled up at him as normal as she could and he gave her a calm smile back. \_He seems normal now.\_ She thought. Maybe it was in reaction to seeing her in her bathrobe?

Imagination was a powerful thing sometimes...

Chizuru wasn't quite sure, but she was quick to put it out of her mind again. "So, where are we going?" she asked him, ducking her head to glance at her feet. She found that she couldn't keep her eyes on his for very long with remembering \_everything\_ she had thought she pushed out of her mind a few seconds ago. She hoped that he wouldn't notice her lack of eye contact.

"Thought we'd just head to a restaurant down town. Remember the place I mentioned last time? They have an excellent selection." He asked her, lifting his arm to wrap it around her shoulders. She tried not to stiffen too much at the touch and forced her shoulders to relax. She couldn't deny that his once comforting hold now made her feel...\_nothing\_. Just unease.

Maybe it was guilt?

Chizuru knew \_why\_ she was so tense around Kazama, but he was going to get the wrong idea if she didn't cut it out. \_Isn't that the point?\_ Chizuru never thought she had an evil little voice and yet, there it was. Scowling and angry sounding in the back of her mind.

"Sounds good." She mumbled and leaned closer to him so he didn't think anything was wrong. Would he \_notice\_ anything was wrong? He hadn't seemed to notice how weird she was walking and if he did, he didn't ask. Chizuru couldn't help but think of Okita. He seemed to know something was wrong just by looking at her. Not only \_that\_, but she was sure she wouldn't be all tense if it was \_his\_ arm around her. Hell, even just \_thinking\_ about it automatically made her shoulders and body ease up.

The car ride to the restaurant was uneventful, thankfully, but things started to feel weird when Chizuru noticed the lack of vehicles in the parking lot. She furrowed her brow and glanced at Kazama, his hand outstretched and waiting for her.

"Are they even open?" she asked, taking his hand and glancing around them.

Kazama quirked an eyebrow at her, "Of course they are." He pushed the doors open with confidence and lead them both into the small and posh foyer. Neither were necessarily dressed correctly for the restaurant, but that didn't seem to bother Kazama or the Waiter who was waiting for them. "I had the whole place booked for just the two of us this evening."

Chizuru's eyes went wide and she gaped at him, "Youâ€"what?" She couldn't seem to wrap her mind around the idea. Sure it was a nice gesture, but \_why?\_ They weren't celebrating anything...were they? She mentally thought over all the possibilities. It wasn't his birthday, or hers, not their anniversary or any major Holiday...so \_why?\_

Kazama rattled something to their waiter who nodded and walked away before he turned towards her. His eyes stared down at hers, a slight edge to them that she'd seen all too often. He knew something. She pressed her lips together, feeling intimidated again. "We have a lot to talk about." He told her gently, leading her to the only table available. The small round table was placed strategically in the middle of the room, right underneath the faux crystal chandelier. "Figured it'd be better if we didn't have an audience."

"So you cleared an entire restaurant...?" she asked skeptically. She knew he liked to be flashy, but mostly to impress others. This sort of thing made Chizuru uncomfortable and a little annoyed. "We could have just talked at your place..." Especially if their conversation was going to go in the direction she thought it would...

He ignored her comment, but the slight pinch on his forehead told her he wasn't pleased by what she said. Kazama walked her to her chair and pulled it out for her as he always did, which she automatically thanked him for. Manners. She was nothing without them. Kazama seated himself across from her just as the waiter came and filled Kazama's glass with a deep red wine and poured Chizuru some water. She thanked him and took a deep drink from it.

What were they going to talk about? What did he know?

Chizuru tried not to let anything show on her end, but it was hard to look confident. It was also hard for her not to just yell at him to hurry up and talk. She was so use to Okita's straight-to-the-point way, that she realized she didn't really have much patience for Kazama's slow show. Kazama took a small sip of his wine and sighed softly. He leveled Chizuru with a look and laid his cup back down on the table. Kazama steepled his fingers together and his lips pulled into a tight thin line again.

"Do you want to start?" he asked, tipping his head slightly to the side.

"I-I..." Chizuru straightened in her chair and she glanced at her water. "I don't know what you want me to say..." \_How about the kiss? Or the party? Maybe your secret friendship with Okita? Or even how she was having doubts about them...?\_ \_Oh, her conscience had a mean side.

Kazama narrowed his eyes at her, obviously seeing through her like she feared. "Oh, come on, Chizuru. How long have we known each other? How long have we been dating for?" he asked, tone curt and stern. "I \_know\_ about you and Okita."

Chizuru stared at him. Did he? Did her disguise not fool him? How much did he know? She frowned, did he have someone constantly watching her like he did the Fraternity? Kazama waved the waiter away when he came by and continued to stare at Chizuru.

"It's easier if you just tell me the truth," he told her, "Why don't you tell me how long you've been friends with him for?"

She didn't want to answer him. In fact, she didn't even want to be in the restaurant anymore, and only then did it become glaringly obvious just how alone they were. Chizuru realized that this was exactly what he had intended for them. No audience indeed.

"Alright then," Kazama leaned back in his chair, eyebrows raised. "If you won't answer that, then answer me this. Why have you disobeyed me?"

Chizuru frowned, "Disobeyed?" she echoed, her features pinching with distaste. That shocked her discomfort away and instantly replaced it with annoyance. He had no right whatsoever to control what she did or who she befriended! She knew that and he certainly did, too.

Kazama's eyes darkened at her reaction. "Yes, disobeyed. I had specifically asked you to stay away from him, didn't I?" His eyes shot to hers.

"Well, yes butâ€"

"So I can only imagine what else you may have done behind my back." Chizuru opened her mouth to retort but she stopped herself when she noticed the waiter coming back, probably assuming they were ready to order since they weren't looking at their menus, but Kazama cut his icy glare to him. "Not now." He seethed and immediately the poor man turned away.

Chizuru took a minute to compose herself, never having seen that icy glare from him before or the way he snapped at the waiter. What other sides of him hadn't she seen before? "What does that mean?" she asked curtly, keeping her chin raised and eyes level with his. "You don't trustâ€" Chizuru cut herself off, she knew that it wasn't right for her to say that when she had indeed betrayed his trustâ€"whether he deserved it or not.

His eyebrows quirked again, "Trust?" He gave her a cold smile, "That's an excellent word. And right now, the answer to that question is no. I do not trust you right now."

Chizuru stared, shocked. She opened her mouth but then closed it instantly, her eyes shifting down to her hands that were bundled on her lap. "I-I..." She wasn't sure what she should say.

"You've been lying to me from the start, Chizuru. Haven't you?" Kazama tsked softly, his expression wounded. "You know you've always had my trust, but then you started acting out. This kind of behavior is way out of line! Something I can only assume has to do with either your roommate or your new found friendship with that Okita characterâ€"something I knew would happen and was the reason why I warned you of him!" He shrugged casually. "Maybe it's both of them."

"My behavior?" she mumbled as she wracked her brain for examples of that. When had she acted out of line with him? Kazama gave her a patronizing look and instantly she knew that he meant all the times

she didn't listen to him. The arguing. The cancelling. The purposely missed calls and unanswered texts. Chizuru frowned, hating how much he was reminding her of her father rather than her boyfriend. Had he ever met a woman who ever disagreed with him? Doubt it.

"Yes, your behavior." He tipped his head to the side again, eyes scrutinizing her. "Now, why don't you just start being honest with me again and stop with all your lies. Tell me. I'm giving you a chance here, so don't disappoint me, please."

Chizuru knew that he was trying to get her to feel guilty and unfortunately it was working. She had lied to him after all, for a long time now and she had known it was wrong to do so in the first place and yet she still did it. She ducked her head again, "Okita and I have been friends since I first started the semester. About a week or so after you warned me of him." She whispered softly.

"Hmm." Kazama hummed in acknowledgement.

It felt strange. In a way, she felt like she was betraying Okita and worse, her heart. She glanced up at him, her frown deep. "I didn't say anything sooner because I knew you wouldn't understand. You kept telling me things about him that weren't true!"

"You don't know him like I know him, Chizuru." He reasoned, eyes sympathetic but she was sure he didn't mean it. She knew how much he hated Okita. "You see only one side of him" "I, on the other hand, have seen the way he acts. I know the way his mind works...he's probably only chasing you to get at me anyway."

Pain sliced through her and she blinked away the sting of tears. She couldn't let him see how that accusation hurt. Maybe on some level, what he said was true but it wasn't all true. Chizuru knew that he was also saying this to hurt her for lying to him. For disobeying. And also to get her to turn her back on Okita and go back to being the obedient girlfriend Kazama didn't have to fuss about.

"O-okita isn't anything like you say he is, Kazama, and I" " love him. Chizuru cut herself off and shook her head. That would not help. That was not for now. Besides, what she felt for Okita didn't matter so long as she was still with Kazama. And Kazama was a safe bet and he did love her. He loved her for years and they had a good thing going on, didn't they?

Really, Chizuru knew she just needed more time to think. She needed to stay away from both until she was clear on what she really wanted. When it came to loyalty, Kazama had it. He'd been by her side from the start of their lives and he had promised her to stay there for far longer. When it came to butterflies, to heart pounding, and raw emotion, Okita had it in piles. Okita called to a side of her that seemed dormant for so long.

Kazama sat waiting, staring intently. "You what?" he asked sternly.

"And I...value his friendship." She locked her eyes on her glass of water, suddenly craving something stronger to warm her insides from his frosty glare. She wanted to tell him how kind and how heroic he was for saving on her first night on campus. But then she'd have to tell him about being mugged. And she still wasn't so sure she was

ready to talk about that. Or was it because it was, as twisted as it was, a special moment between her and Okita? "He's a great guyâ€" "

Kazama slammed his hand down on the table in front of them and made Chizuru jump. Her eyes widened and stopped speaking immediately. He stared slightly stunned at his hand and slowly withdrew it. Kazama pressed his lips together tightly and took a sip of his wine.

They sat in a tense silence for a moment. When Kazama finally seemed to compose himself, he straightened in his seat and leaned forward once again. His dark eyes settled on hers in that hard way and she forced herself to hold his gaze.

"You can understand why I am upset over this, can't you?" He shook his head slightly, "Can you understand why I'd worry about you? You're still so naive and innocent when it comes to the way others think. Of course you'd see the good in him, that's the innocence in you. You wish to see the good in everythingâ€"in every\_one\_."

Chizuru frowned and tried to fight off the feeling of annoyance again. Why did he insist on treating her like she didn't know better? Sure, she had a lot to learn about the 'big, bad world' around them...but she wasn't stupid. If he knew about the kiss she shared with Okita and what her dreams had been that lead to it, he'd know just how innocent she actually was.

"But I can no longer stand by and allow for this to continue. You may refuse to see the truth, but I won't stay on the side lines and wait for him to hurt you or worse! Don't you care that your reputation will start tanking because you're seen with him? You are not to see him again, am I clear?"

Chizuru felt angry and frustrated tears prick the corner of her eyes. Who was this man? She certainly didn't know him. "W-wh...?" she was speechless and instead sat back in defeat. What could she say to him now? Nothing.

"If I see him near you, or you near him, then I will be forced to take extreme measures." He took a casual drink of his wine, "I'll make sure your father realizes what is going on and once he finds out, I'm sure you know what will happen." He gave her a sharp look. Of course she knew what he was implying. Her father would use any excuse he could to pull her out of that school and she knew he wouldn't even hesitate if Kazama gave his okay.

"But you know, this all could have been avoided had you been honest from the start. But now," Kazama sneered, "Now it makes me seem like the bad guy in the scenario when really it's the other way around! You really are careless at times."

Her heart twisted in the worst way. His words stung her horribly and she almost preferred to be in physical pain than the one he was causing her. And did he really just threaten to tattle on her if she didn't listen? Was this was normal relationships were like? Wasn't it suppose to be a partnership?

Is he right? She thought sadly. Was she taking this the wrong way because she had feelings for Okita? He was just trying to look out

for her after all...but to what extent? To her, it seemed like he just didn't want to share, like a toddler with his shiny new toy. Chizuru frowned at the thought, she hated how accurate it fit. But, in a way, she did have to put her foot down when it came to Okita. She knew she had to figure things out first.

Kazama gave her a patient smile that she blankly stared at, he waved the waiter back over. "Well now that that's out of the way, we can order." He glanced down at his menu and gave Chizuru an encouraging nod. "Order whatever you want."

Chizuru only nodded, not having the voice to tell him that she had long since lost her appetite for the night.

\* \* \*

><p>"Why aren't you in class?"<p>

Okita huffed in a breathe and continued to jab at the air in front of him, "Why aren't you?" he asked, his eyes locked on the sand bag in front of him. He jumped back half a step, then sprang forward at it with a high kick.

Saito gave him a firm frown. "My classes are over. We're heading into evening classes now, but you'd know that if you didn't skip."

"I figured Hijikata would be here to scold me, not you."

"He's busy. Won't be able to see you beforehand this time. Do you need a partner?"

This time Okita dropped his fists and glanced at him, "Sure can." He stretched his arms high above his head and forced a smirk on his face. Lately, he'd been forcing a lot of things around his brothers, but for good reason. If he showed them just how upset he still was about the whole confrontation, they wouldn't leave him alone about it.

For three days straight, all he did day to night with breaks every so often, he trained and conditioned hard. Lately, he'd been neglecting his conditioning more and more due to wanting to clock time in with Chizuru...The first day he started up again to get back into the swing of things, he really felt it deep in his muscles. It was soothing, in a strange sore wayâ€"a reminder that he couldn't keep neglecting conditioning.

It didn't matter how hard he trained or practiced on his skills, if he didn't keep working on his stamina or endurance, he'd be done before he knew it.

Training as hard as he did was the only thing that kept his mind blank and empty long enough from all things involving Chizuru. That also may have been why he was avoiding going to his classes. He wasn't one hundred percent sure he was ready to face her or even sure he could see Kazama yet without seeing red again. Just the thought had energy zipping through him at an angry pace.

"I need to practice some take downs, could you get Heisuke here too?" he asked, turning away from him to focus on the sand bag again, he had another twenty minutes or so left.

"Sure." Saito stepped back into Okita's peripherals, "And go easy on the bag. We've already replaced it three times within the last few days and you should only be working on speed rather than force. You'll bust your knuckles up that way."

Okita grinned, "Well, aren't you just glad to see how focused I am today?" he asked as he started to jump in place to get his arms and legs going.

"Now only if you kept that up on a regular basis." He stated simply before leaving. Okita rolled his eyes and started to work the bag again. His knuckles weren't wrapped for this and he knew that Saito was right. He couldn't go full out like he normally would like to, less he wanted to give himself a handicap. Okita couldn't have that, he was going into the fight with a grudge. A grudge not necessarily for his opponent but definitely for someone and it would have to do.

For the next two hours, he kept himself focused as he went through multiple drills with Saito. The first drill they settled on was to focus on Okita's agility. With his elbows tucked close to his sides and fists raised, Saito had Okita duck and weave back and forth as if he were dodging wayward punches. Loudly, but without actually yelling, Saito counted off in intervals. Okita did five sets of those with a thirty second down time between sets.

Easily, sweat started to bead and roll down his body to the point where he discarded his shirt before even finishing. Saito only gave him a patronizing look, one that said he needed to train more often if he was already so winded.

\_Yeah, you're telling me. \_

The next drill was focused on strength, Saito had Okita practice up on the very small boxing ring the school had. It doubled for many things at the gym, but mostly for sparring for the Boxing club. He was surprised no one thought to look at the activities going on at the smaller gym like they did the bigger one—but figured Hijikata had some pull over that. Not that seeing him train would be enough to get him in trouble, but definitely would get him on the radar a lot more often. He didn't need that kind of attention.

Up on the ring, Saito effortlessly moved the sandbag that weighed half of Okita's body weight off the hook before carrying it over to him. Slinging the bag over his shoulders, Saito had Okita do a set of squats, followed by lunges, and then to finish the interval, had him toss the bag clear over his shoulder as if the bag were an opponent he'd take down, and deliver two clear blows.

Half an hour of that had his muscles singing and blood pumping. The whole drill was not an ease feat to do, considering he wasn't bulky muscle like Shinpachi, but it worked him out. He liked the drills Saito created for him. Each time it was something new and something unique that he found useful. Half the time Okita's fights were against guys bigger than him, being able to take them down was important if he couldn't knock them out with punches or kicks alone.

The final drill Saito had ready for Okita was focused more on a blend

of different things. On the ground, Saito laid out a long vertical mat. Every couple feet, he laid down a divider to serve as an obstacle for Okita. Saito grabbed two Thai punching pads and strapped them over his hands, instructing Okita to put on his gloves.

"With this drill, the point is to side shuffle back and forth across the mat. When you reach the end, you give me two solid jabs" to the pads, of course, drop down to a sprawl and then shuffle on back. Got it? Shuffle, jab, sprawl, repeat."

Okita nodded, resisting the urge to roll his eyes at the slightly complicated drill. He understood the purpose of it, it was actually really good, but where did the guy come up with these things? It was a mystery to him.

Out of all the drills they did and had done for the last couple days, he really liked the one he was doing. It kept him energetic, made him feel faster than he actually was and he could easily feel the burn in muscles he long ago thought were worked out to the max, if possible.

"Keep up the pace, good!" Saito kept the Thai punching pads steady as Okita gave him the two solid punches. Saito then swung openly at him with his left arm and routinely, Okita ducked and dropped down to the ground in a sprawl, jumped back up and shuffled quickly to the side with high knees. Repeat.

When he finished his final set, he straightened and started to shake his arms out. Saito gave him a firm nod, obviously pleased. "Good. If you keep that up, Hijikata won't have to worry."

Okita snorted, taking advantage of the down time to take a long drink of water. "\_Right\_." He mumbled skeptically. He was sure that so long as he was alive, Hijikata would always have something to worry about.

Saito couldn't stop the small smile. He was quick to push it away as he straightened and glanced over at Heisuke who was stretching on the mats a few feet away from them. "Take few minutes, then go over a few take downs with Heisuke again and then you should eat."

"Sure." He answered. Okita hated to admit it even to himself, but his activities of all the days previous was starting to take it's belated effects on him, but he'd never admit out loud. He knew he probably pushed it a little further than he should've but his mind was free in those last hours and he suppose he just got lost in it all.

Heisuke, who was laying flat on the mat, raised his upper body in what looked like a sit up but rather than keep his arms to his head, he jabbed at the air in front of him before he laid back down. For the short second he was back down, he took the moment to catch his breath then repeated the motion.

Okita watched, slightly curious but mostly because he had nothing else to do but wait for him to finish. Out of all of them, Heisuke was his most guaranteed back up for the Underground"which, unfortunately wasn't saying much. Out of them all, he was the only other one who had nothing to lose...\_yet\_. Saito, Sanosuke, even Shinpachi all had too much at stake to lose if they were ever caught exclusively involved with the Underground. Sure they each had their



part in it, but if ever directly asked or if push came to shove, none of them could take full responsibility for fighting.

That was all on him. Every four years, there was always one they picked to hold this 'chip' as it was called. It wasn't like Okita was a lost cause, but he didn't mind if he lost it all for the sake of his Fraternity. He had other skills that were employable, he didn't need a diploma from the University for that. Fuck, he knew that the only reason he was even there was because his sister had begged him to give school a chance.

She said a chance, but nothing about actually succeeding. If he dropped now, he'd be the only one in his family to have made it that far and that in itself was an achievement to brag about. To be fair, it wasn't like he wasn't trying either, Hijikata would never allow that and he would never disrespect his sister like that either. Having friends at the same school he was attending wasn't all too bad either, even if they often annoyed him they were his constant that gave him comfortâ€”but he'd rather throw a fight than admit that out loud.

But if anything happened, he had the least to loseâ€”next to Heisuke and the other pledges who were just starting out and fresh. Once they all settled and started to think about Majors, that would change too. And it wasn't like that was the only factor that they looked at when it came down to who they chose. There was so much more.

Okita knew the kid had potential, that much was obvious, but among the stars of the Fraternity, Heisuke hardly ranked. With time, he was sure Heisuke could easily work his way up. Work on his potential and morph it into something that could easily step into his shoes if worse came to worse. Which really, could very well be around the corner.

He made a mental note to talk to Hijikata about that. If anything, the kid needed to learn more about fighting in general. It was almost time to assign him a permanent role in the Underground and he was hoping he'd get something other than merely his back up. He didn't really wish that role on anyone at the moment. Okita was sure they weren't too worried about that role either.

Heisuke sat up when he finished and grinned up at Okita, "You ready?" he asked, his chest heaving slightly.

"You already wiped out?" he asked, giving a small chuckle. He lowered his water bottle and joined Heisuke on the mats. Okita started to stretch and Heisuke followed his lead.

"Hilarious." He replied dryly. "I'm fine, ass."

Okita shook his head, "You don't have to lie. I get that you'd be nervous. Last time didn't work out so well for you."

Heisuke grunted with annoyance, "I didn't know what to expect then! I do now!" He pushed himself to his knees and smacked his right fist into his open hand. "Come on!"

"Pretty eager there." Okita pushed himself to his knees and stretched his arms quickly. "You still have time to back away." Heisuke ignored him and raised his hands, ready to grapple with Okita. Shuffling on

his knees, Okita shifted his body, his own hands raising to mimic Heisuke's.

In the blink of an eye, Okita lunged towards Heisuke. His right arm wound around his lower body as his left came up to the base of his neck before he forced his weight down on Heisuke, causing him to go down on the mat. The side of Heisuke's face pushed onto the mat and he grunted with annoyance.

"Fuck!" he smacked the mat in front of him and Okita pushed off. He grinned down at him and Heisuke rolled onto his back, glaring up at him. "That one doesn't count." Heisuke hissed, quickly pushing himself up to his feet.

"Sure, sure." Okita got his feet and raised his arms, "But you can't keep saying that, you know." Heisuke rolled his eyes and this time made the first move. Okita easily pushed his arms away and broke the hold—annoyance flitted through Heisuke's eyes. Yeah, Okita wasn't playing nice nor fair considering the point of the drill was to allow the other person to go through their take down, not dodge or break it. But where was the fun in that? Whoever he was going up against next was not going to just stand there for him.

Heisuke must have noticed the challenge in his eyes, cause he didn't stay mad and instead actually started to focus. Back and forth they struggled with Heisuke holding off fairly well this time around. Okita liked to practice his take downs with Heisuke due to his small size, it automatically forced Okita to work harder than with anyone else. Shinpachi was another one he liked to practice with, since most he fought were shaped much like he was.

In the end, Okita came out victorious, with Heisuke only down by three. He wasn't strong enough to keep his hold on Okita for long, but regardless, it was a fun challenge. Okita stretched again in order to cool down his muscles.

"Good job." He told him. Heisuke shrugged as nonchalantly as he could, but Okita could see that he appreciated the compliment. "You should train more often. At least on your strength. You're still such a runt."

Heisuke snorted, "Yeah, well, this runt nearly had you there!"

Okita chuckled and shook his head, "Sure you did."

"I did!" Heisuke argued heatedly as he gathered his items. He glared at Okita, "Come on! 3 take downs on you is a big deal!"

"But it's still not a win." Okita reminded him with a smug smirk.

Heisuke rolled his eyes, "Whatever, douche." He grumbled as he stomped away. Okita shook his head and followed him out of the gym. No matter what Heisuke said, Okita wasn't going to tell him more than the one compliment. He was still a pledge and Heisuke's ego was still easily inflatable.

The fresh cool air chased away Okita's sweat and he sighed at the relief it caused. Instantly, his thoughts jumped back to the one person he didn't want to keep thinking about. He was very tempted to

just turn back into the gym that was now his sanctuary from his real life and problems, at least until the fight but knew he couldn't.

He gritted his teeth and pushed Chizuru to the very far back corner of his mind, even though he was dying to text her. She had texted him the last few days, mentioning things like if he wasn't feeling good and that they needed to talk soon and whatever. Okita had a feeling what it was she wanted to talk about and he wasn't sure he could hear her say what Kazama had said to him. Chizuru had even sent him messages to his Social Media page that he decided to suspend his account for a whileâ€"that was mostly because he found himself staring at the few pictures she had on her page.

Okita was sick, he knew it, but he just couldn't stop himself from looking or snooping. Why was she a habit so hard to break? He squeezed his eyes shut and tried to clear his mind again. He couldn't think about her now, or her stupid douche of a boyfriend...he had a fight to look forward to.

\* \* \*

><p>Chizuru stared absentmindedly at the seat beside her. For three days straight, the chair remained empty beside her during English class. For three days, she diligently brought breakfast hopingâ€"<em>wishing<em>, actuallyâ€"to see him there. But no, for three days she threw away his cup of coffee and the leftover donuts and went on with her day like she wasn't missing a big part of her daily routine.

Honestly, she wasn't even sure what she would do or say to Okita if she saw him. Could she really keep a straight face around him and act like her boyfriend didn't basically threaten Chizuru to keep away? Or would he be fine and not care about their friendship like the guy Kazama kept insisting he was?

She kept going over and over the conversation with Kazama, the harsh words he said to her and her guilt. It seemed clear right away what she should do, but then she'd start tending to her still slightly sore ankle and think of Okita's kindness, his friendship and she'd instantly change her mind.

Guilt was soon mixed with pain that flooded her thoughts on and off for the last few days before she refused to think about the whole situation. She didn't know what to do. Chizuru was torn between doing what she thought was right and what she knew was right. Her heart and her head were in a war.

Kazama was her boyfriend for practically five years and was a family friend for far longer than that! Could she really throw that away for someone she only just met? Someone she didn't really know? With Kazama, she was in a place of comfort and simplicity, but where was the love she once had for him? That was her main concern. Chizuru knew that if she still loved Kazama the way she did before, then there'd be no problem. But the bottom line was she wasn't anymore.

So why wasn't she hurrying to break up with him? Chizuru sighed softly and poked her donut, opting to sip at her latte since she really wasn't feeling hungry anymore. Listening to Kazama or not, so far Okita was making it pretty easy to avoid him. He did answer her

texts, but with only one word most of the time and his social media page was disconnected so she couldn't message him or check up on him. Okita was basically gone and she hated every minute of it.

Chizuru frowned and started to pick apart her donut apart as she mindlessly listened to Professor Inoue's lesson. Chizuru didn't know how she was ever going to pass the class if she didn't pay attention, there always seemed to be something else on her mind or someone distracting her. Once again, she glanced longingly at the seat next to her. What she would give for him to be there tugging at her hair again.

\_What does that tell you?\_ The little voice in her head was only getting louder now a days and she was strangely starting to agree with it. \_There's your answer, idiot. \_But she really didn't agree with how mean that little voice was.

Her eye skipped to the clock and she quietly started to gather her things. She could barely contain herself. But now that her mind was somewhat made up, she had to act now before she lost her nerve and she had \_a lot\_ to do. The bell rang, signaling that class was over and she quickly grabbed the rest of her things she didn't pack and started to hurry down the steps.

Chizuru hoped that Kazama wasn't waiting for her outside \_again\_ like he'd done the last few days. She wasn't ready to face him just yet, but she knew she would sooner rather than later, \_that\_ wasn't going to change in her plans. Just as she reached the door, she was stopped by her Professor.

He waved at her to come by him and she tried to get a hold of herself. Had he seen how distracted she was? Or worse...? She moved around some lingering students hoping to eavesdrop and walked up to him. Professor Inoue was a kind looking man, older with a constant easy going smile to his face. Instantly, she let herself relax despite feeling antsy to leave.

He waited until the classroom was empty to speak. "Yukimura, have you heard from Okita?" he asked, tipping his head slightly. "I know how close you two are."

Chizuru immediately blushed, "We're not that close...!" she mumbled automatically, but she knew she wasn't fooling him. His smile seemed to widen just a fraction more and she once again found herself relaxing. Why was she freaking out for? He was her teacher, not her father or Kazama. Professor Inoue wasn't going to judge her. He was a perceptive one, she gave him that. "Uh, right. No, I haven't heard from him."

Professor Inoue nodded, "I see." He glanced down at his desk and started pushing papers about as he searched for something, "I \_know\_ how busy he can get, not that I \_approve\_, but that's none of my business really. I just would hate it if this became a repeat of last yearâ€"ah!" Inoue grabbed some papers that were paper clipped together and held them out towards her, "Would you mind taking those to him as soon as possible? There's a test at the end of the week and I'd like for him to be prepared. Tell him I won't cut him any slack if he's not prepared."

"Iâ€"uh..." Chizuru didn't know what to say, or really, what to

address first. What did Professor Inoue know and how? Was he talking about the Underground that he didn't approve of? She glanced at the papers he held out and she took them, seeing the papers they'd received Monday and photocopies of his notes during his lectures. "Okay. I'll let him know."

He gave her his warm smile again, "Good. Thank you, Yukimura." Chizuru gave an awkward half nod, still obviously stunned from his comment and very much intrigued. She put the notes in her journal and started to leave again. "He's a good kid, you know. Rough around the edges, definitely, but good."

Chizuru paused and glanced at him curiously, but he was already preoccupied with something on his desk again. She smiled, "Yeah." She heard herself whisper, mostly to herself. "He is." With that, she left and was really glad to see that Kazama was not waiting for her. She was half way down the hall when she spotted the tall redheaded man she saw her first day on campus. Chizuru knew he was part of the Student Council and she hesitated when they made eye contact. So sure, Kazama couldn't make it so he sent someone else. Anger flared through her and she narrowed her eyes at him.

"Where are you heading to?" he asked calmly.

Chizuru straightened, "I'm not feeling well." The man gave her a skeptical look and she shrugged, not caring if he believed her or not. "You can pass that along to Kazama if you have to. I don't care." She shifted away from him, "Also, while you're at it, tell him I'll be speaking with him very soon."

She noticed him take a half step towards her, as if he had more to say, but then thought better of it. With a firm nod and nothing else, he turned and walked away. Chizuru sighed with relief and the small confrontation gave her courage. That was easier than she thought.

Half running and power walking, she started to head back to her dorm rather than her next class. Usually, Chizuru wouldn't even dare to skip class, but this was an exception. As she rushed up the stairs as best she could and down the hall, she slide her card key into the door and entered. She smiled widely at Sen who glanced up from the book she was reading.

Sen glanced at her curiously and then looked at her clock by her bed, "Your back awfully early, aren't ya?" She wiggled her eyebrows at her, "Chizuru, are you skipping?"

Chizuru dropped her bag and books at her desk then all but hopped on the bed beside her friend. "Yes!" She bit her lip and bounced slightly. Chizuru wasn't sure giddy was what she should be feeling, but she was. Maybe it was due to the fact that she wasn't allowing herself to feel guilty anymore? Whatever the reason, for once, she felt confident in her decision. "And you know what? It feels good! I've never skipped a class before!"

"Really?" Sen turned onto her side and smiled up at her friend. "There's always a first for everything. Good for you!"

"Yeah and you know what else?" Chizuru turned towards her and Sen waited for her to continue. "I'm breaking up with Kazama."

Sen's eyes widened and she pushed herself up right. Chizuru nearly fell off the edge of the bed with the sudden motion. "What?" she asked, blinking at her in stunned surprise. "\_Really?\_ You sure?"

Chizuru nodded, feeling...relieved at having said it out loud. "Really. Sen, I've never been so sure of anything in my life."

"Is it because you're in love with Okita?" she asked, her stunned expression morphing into a wide knowing smile.

This time, Chizuru looked down with a shy smile. That was the main reason, but she was also doing it for herself. She could no longer be in a relationship that was toxic to her. She didn't even get a chance to answer Sen before she pulled Chizuru in for a tight hug. "Oh, \_finally\_!" she all but shrieked excitedly. "You have no idea how frustrating it was to watch you so obviously in love with him but denying it while dating with someone who doesn't deserve you!"

"Frustrating for \_you?\_ You have no idea what I've been putting myself through thinking about \_all\_ this!" Chizuru hugged her friend back and pulled back with a sigh, "I should have talked to you about this whole thing sooner and when you offered. I was just...afraid that you'd start thinking of me differently. I didn't want to lose your friendship..."

Sen frowned, "How could you ever think that?" she asked softly, "We're friends \_and\_ roommates! I'll always have your back, even if we disagree! And when it comes to your problems, you can take \_all\_ the time you need when it comes down to telling me or not. When \_you're\_ ready to do so, Chizuru. I'll always be here to give you advice if I have it and a shoulder to cry on if you need it! Don't ever forget that!"

"Thank you." Chizuru smiled at her friend. Why had she ever doubted that she'd be there for her? Without judgement on her change of heart, without pressure to give her more if she wasn't ready, and without anger for her assumption. "How did you know I liked him?" she finally asked, eyebrows pinching only a bit. She'd always feared that she was obvious despite being careful.

Sen's eyebrow quirked, "Where you \_trying\_ to keep it a secret?" she teased, laughing lightly. "Sweetie, you may not realize it, but you wear your emotions like Sorority girls wear designer clothesâ€"plain as day. I knew it the day after we went to Okita's fight. I could see it in your eyes and I could see it in his too. He's almost as bad as you!"

"Really...?" She felt herself start to blush and she raised her hands to cover her face.

"Of course! He hides it a lot better, but if you watch for it, you can see it." Sen sighed dramatically and rather love struck, "Are you going to tell him?"

"Planning on it. I just have to take care of a few things first," Chizuru got off Sen's bed and made it over to hers. "It's a long story...you want to hear it?"

Sen grinned back at her, "Oh, do I ever."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>An: End of part 1. :) \*\*

## 12. Affirmation Pt 2

\_AU. OkitaXChizuru. Romance.\_

\*\*A/N: As promised, here's Part 2 right away! :D And this chapter is, of course, dedicated to \_all of you\_ who wait for my updates and who love reading this story! Thanks guys! \_Enjoy!\_ \*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Crazy<strong>

\*\*Chapter 12: Affirmation Pt. 2\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><em>What the hell where you thinking?<em>

Okita tipped his head back and let the water from the shower wash away his sweat and dried up blood. He winced and couldn't help but hiss out in pain as the water hit sensitive areas all over. Obviously, he \_wasn't\_ thinking to make it out of the fight clean or else he never would've let his damn opponent get in those few punches on him.

He closed his eyes and tried hard not to go over his latestâ€"and by far the \_worst\_â€"fight he'd \_ever\_ been in. And 'worse' was an understatement. The whole thing kept coming back to him, despite trying not to think about it, and he kept cursing himself over the whole thing.

The fight had started out normal enough. As always, his opponent was \_nothing\_ compared to what he trained with and trained for. The guy was bulkier than he was use to, but other than muscle, he was a slow one. The few hits muscle-head had gotten in on Okita hurt like hell, but wasn't anything he couldn't handle.

Okita remembered, vividly, how he managed to sweep his opponent rather easily and was able to take down his big frame \_twice\_ within the first twenty minutes of the round. He successfully managed to get the upper hand and just when he was starting to really hit his strideâ€"he got distracted. For a moment, just a small moment, he became unfocused and thought he saw dark hair that looked achingly familiar in his peripherals.

Normally, something so small and trivial wouldn't affect him so. Normally, he wouldn't be craving and longing to see the girl with dark hair as much as he had been. So of course, \_normally\_, he wouldn't ever get distracted by something like that. Normally, he was in the right frame of mind. But no, \_of course\_ he wasn't this time.

Okita turned in that half second where he was holding muscle-head down, fist poised to deliver it's third punch, when he turned to follow the dark hair. His thoughts jumped to Chizuru and the odds that she'd show up to his fight. Was she there to cheer him on? Was she there to follow up with Kazama's warning? Was she there for something else entirely?

That second of distraction nearly cost him everything and it wasn't even her.

Muscle-head didn't even wait to get the upper hand. Quickly he rolled Okita over from his mount, his weight easily pinning down Okita's before muscle-head got in few mind numbing, skull ringing, head pounding punches that rattled him and had him seeing white spots and stars. He remembered hearing Heisuke yell obscenities from the side lines, the crowd growing louder as his opponent took the lead. He remembered his vision darkening from his left side as muscle-head started to blur above him before he managed to drag his arms up to shield his face.

Okita had just barely managed to turn the fight around after that. His heavy opponent huffed from above him, his punches getting slower despite his second wind as he continued trying to punch around his arms that protected his face. He could've easily tried to force him to tap out, but no, he was going for the knock out and no one was going to jump in until that was done.

Way back when he had started, Okita had specifically instructed his brothers not to ever throw in the towel until he was knocked out. If he was going to lose, he was going to black out first. That fight, he decided as he was getting hit, was not going to be one of those times. There was no way in hell he was going to lose to bulky, unworthy muscle-head from Edo.

So he waited, for what seemed like hours of muscle-head basically sitting on top of him and hitting him, for just the right moment. The moment was fast and he acted quickly, feeling his adrenaline giving him a burst of energy. Okita knocked muscle-head's arms away when he threw a punch, then grabbed his opponent's arms from above the elbow in a vicelike grip. In order for muscle-head to break the hold he'd have to pull his arms straight up, which from their position, made it difficult to do. The next best option would be to back off of Okita completely, or try a hail-mary trick.

Thankfully for Okita, muscle-head was apparently all brawn and no brain as he stupidly went for the hail-mary trick. He tried to head butt Okita in a lame attempt to injure him and get him to break his hold without giving up his mount. Okita, being the clever guy he was, expected it and took the small shift his weight and bucked upwards from his waist as muscle-head leaned, easily managing to topple him and effectively rolling them both backward so Okita was back on top of the mount.

Even with his eye closing up from the swelling and his busted lip bleeding, he didn't let up on his punches. His opponent struggled, tried hard to do what Okita had, but he wasted most of his energy earlier with his heavy duty punches and had no such luck.

Instead, Okita managed to knock him out. It should've been an easy win, from the get go. That much was obvious, and even if his fans did



eat the whole fight up, he could tell his fellow Fraternity brothers were not as pleased. Not that he could blame them, he was pissed too. For a second back there, he almost lost. That could've been his first lost since he started and it would have been to a talent-less nobody from Edo. He never had to work so hard to ensure a win before.

Okita had never felt more undeserving of his win. Could he call that a victory? He just wanted to put the whole thing behind him. Okita had wanted this fight to feel better, but instead, he only felt worse. His throbbing face wasn't helping his sour mood, either. He'd seen his reflection when he was changing and couldn't help but get angry at himself all over again.

\_Shit. Where the fuck was your head?\_

Muscle-head really did pack some force behind his punches, unfortunately. Okita's only consolation was that he left him looking worse by the end of the fight. The ride back to the house was a quiet one. Someone had handed him some over-the-counter pain killers—which he took without water, then reluctantly accepted the ice pack that he had pressed to the side of his head, namely over his left eye that was swelling pretty badly before he dismissed himself to shower.

Now he was clean, his head was still pounding from more than just from the physical blows and he was back to his foul mood that began Sunday. All he wanted was to go and crawl in his bed, sleep, and forget about his troubles. Preferably, drop his classes, live at the gym as to avoid people, only come out of hiding for scheduled fights...and sleep.

None of it was plausible, but he dared to dream.

Okita rummaged through his drawers until he found his pack of cigarettes and grumbled curses under his breath as he went in search of his lighter. As much as he had wanted to, he laid off the smokes the last three days—mostly because he was training almost all hours of the day that he was too tired to even attempt to light a cigarette, much less smoke one.

Not now, though. He couldn't drink away the pain, since pain meds and alcohol don't mix, so instead he had to opt for the good ol' nicotine and methanol taste. Okita dug around with one good eye the best he could until he found the lighter in one of his old pants. Silently, he worked his way downstairs so he could get out on the porch and light the bad boy up.

Honestly, he didn't really want to go outside, but he didn't want to bother the others with his smoke inside. What could he say? He was generous like that. Okita already had a cigarette stuck in his mouth, ready to go, when Hijikata popped in his line of vision.

Okita didn't need both eyes to see him, or know how pissed he was. Hijikata's stern gaze landed on his cigarette hanging between his lips and he repressed his groan. No one had mentioned Hijikata would stop by—had they? He couldn't remember, but he was sure even if they mentioned it, he wouldn't have remembered anyway.

"Hey—"

"Cut the shit." Hijikata's eyes narrowed even further as he reached up and plucked the cigarette from his lips. He snapped the thing in half and tossed it in the nearest garbage bin. Okita tipped his head back and tried to keep his temper from flaring. This really wasn't the week to test him.

"Good to know you're in a fun mood." He teased, smirking despite really wanting to shout obscenities. That seemed to be his default reaction.

Hijikata didn't even acknowledge his remark, instead he gestured to the large living room. "Have you forgotten that today is the Fraternity meeting?"

Okita rolled his eyes, "Is it too late to go back upstairs and fake illness?" he asked. His tone may have been forcibly light, but he meant it. Every couple months, Hijikata organized a Fraternity meeting with every single member of the group. And he meant, every single member.

Surprisingly, not all the members lived in the house or on campus grounds—it was a personal decision whether to board, stay in a dorm, or live in your own place. So long as one was a student at the college and an active member—as in participate at mixers, fundraisers, or the Underground—then you were considered an active member. Their Fraternity was a very lax one with strict rules and yes, it was just as confusing as it sounded.

Hijikata insisted that very few months, the Fraternity get together and discuss things. Usually, all the topics were picked by Hijikata and were usually rules or boring lectures of how they should act and how they each have a chip on their shoulders due to their involvement with the Underground—whether directly or not. It reminded Okita of a knitting circle, minus the juicy gossip or interesting topics of discussion.

Okita was sure that Hijikata was just fussy that he didn't have a foot in the Fraternity like he use to. He had long since graduated and he was sure, though he would never admit it, he missed the whole who-ha of it all. In a way, he went from Fraternity brother to mother hen, constantly clucking at all of them to behave.

"Hilarious." Hijikata snipped, "But you know you have to stay up anyway. Gotta make sure you don't have a concussion."

"This?" Okita gestured to his puffy eye that he was sure would be a nasty shade of blue soon and grinned. "Nah. You worry too much."

Hijikata only gave him a long glare before Okita raised his hands in surrender. "Alright, alright." He turned and walked into the living room that, not surprisingly, was already full of his fellow Fraternity brothers. Most did a double take when he entered the room, having not seen his battered face and very much shocked to see it so.

It shouldn't have been a rarity, but it was. The stupid fight was the first he'd ever come out looking like he lost and it was a painful reminder never to let his mind wander too much ever again. Sure he

was all about giving his fans a show, but not like that. Okita wasn't even sure he wanted to hear what they had to say after the fight.

With a tight scowl, he sat down at an open spot near Heisuke and glared at the faces he hadn't seen in a while as they stared at him. Some got the message that he wasn't okay with the gawking, othersâ€”like one of the pledgesâ€”didn't seem to understand the glare. The pledge wasn't even being sneaky about it, he just outright openly stared as if he were trying to figure out some great mystery. There was no mystery, he got socked in the face, how hard was it to figure that out?

The pledge didn't even blend in with the rest of them, he stood out mostly due to his dark blue hair that rivaled Heisuke's in the messy hair department. He didn't even seem to register the glare Okita was shooting him, he'd only met the kid once or twice but hadn't really talked to him much. Now seemed a good a time as any.

"Oi, got a problem?" he asked. It was hard to look menacing when half your face was puffy and hurt like hell, but he managed it.

The pledge blinked and had the gall to look stunned that Okita had called him out. His cheeks flushed slightly but he didn't back down as easily or as quickly as most would. "No, I don't." He answered briefly, shrugging.

Okita quirked an eyebrow, "Never seen the beginnings of a black eye before?" He asked gesturing to his eye. He wished he hadn't forgotten his ice pack in his room, but having the whole Fraternity around made him thankful he did. He was known as the fighter out of all of them and he didn't want to show them how much his soon-to-be shiner was actually hurting.

"I was justâ€”"

"Yeah, I'm sure." Okita cut him off swiftly, his anger easily coming forth. It was easy to lash out at someone he didn't really know. "If you're that interested, kid, I'll gladly give you one so you can experience it first hand." He gave him a cold smirk and the pledge frowned, his eyes narrowing into his own glare.

Okita had to admit, he wasn't like most others. In fact, he actually reminded him of Heisuke. Short temper and a lot of attitude. Didn't any of them have any respect for their upper class man? Heisuke sighed, turning towards Okita.

"Seriously, does your adrenaline have an off button?" Heisuke shook his head, "Don't blame Ryunosuke for staring at your beat up face, Okita. That's what happens when you lose focus..."

"You know you pledges sure a cheeky, lately. Maybe it's time someone put you guys in your place?" Okita pushed himself to his feet, ignored the dizzy spin his head gave him from rushing to his feet so fast, and gave them both a hard stare. He knew he was acting like an asshole, but hey, he was in a bad mood. The meeting could not have been scheduled at a more horrible time.

"Sit down, Souji." Hijikata entered the living room and glared at him. "Heisuke move to the other couch with Ryunosuke. And will you

\_all\_ please shut the hell up?" Violet eyes stared intensely at them all for a moment and the small chattering instantly stopped as eyes looked up at him. Okita sat himself back down as Heisuke moved to the other side.

Hijikata moved himself so he had everyone in his sights and everyone could easily see him. The living room was pretty full at the moment, full of faces he hadn't seen or talked to in a while and normally he'd be pretty decentâ€"but he still couldn't shake his foul mood. If Hijikata had just let him have a smoke, he was sure he'd be able to deal with the meeting.

"It seems like everyone is here." He started out, his eyes scanning the room. "So we'll get started. First topic of discussion is, of course, The Underground." His eyes cut right to Okita and he frowned, "Saito has informed me about your match just a few hours earlier and let me just say, we are going to talk in private, Souji. You can count on it."

Okita closed his eyes in anger.

\_Fucking great.\_

\* \* \*

><p>Chizuru's conversation with Sen went marvelously. After wards, Sen was so full of understanding and support, that she finally understood the concept of girl talk and opening up to a fellow friend. Why had she been delaying it for so long? She didn't understand...well, she did, but she wished she had just done it sooner!<p>

Now, she had been on the phone with her father for well over an hour trying to plead her case, as was phase 2 of her plan. Chizuru realized that if she took that away from Kazama, he had nothing to hold over her. And what better way to break the news to her father than personally doing so? Besides, she should be able to tell him anything, right?

It took Sen half an hour to convince her of that.

"Dad, I know that...but you need to understand that I'm not going anywhere."

"Do you really expect me to believe that you'll be safe there if you don't have Kazama by your side?" Her father sighed into the phone and Chizuru rolled her eyes.

"Yes, I do! This school is safe, dad." There was no way in hell she'd ever bring up her first day at school. She had barely been able to tell Sen and she fussed over her for about five minutes before she finally convinced her that she was fine. "Believe it or not, Kazama has not always been by my side like you think. He's usually too busy."

"Of course he is. Chizuru, be reasonable, he's an ambitious man with high goals. Isn't that admirable? Your brother's the same way."

Chizuru didn't want to think how similar her brother and boyfriend

were. It was a weird thought and only furthered her resolve to break up with him. Her father and brother were more than enough in the 'way too busy' category. "Yes, it's admirable dad. That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying that I can't be in this relationship anymore. It has nothing to do with his goals or ambition. It has to do with what I'm feeling. Can you understand that?"

There was a long pause. "Chizuru, of course I understand what you're saying...I just don't like it\_. And I'm sure your brother would agree." He sighed into the phone again, "If you go through with this, than I'm sorry but I'll have to insist that you come home and we rethink your school of choice and major. If you go to my Alma Materâ€" "

"No\_, dad. I will not switch schools just to appease you. Please\_, understand. This school has the best credentials for Teaching degreesâ€"that's what I want. Just...you have to give me a chance, dad. You can come visit me more, I'll call home more than once a week, come home for all the holidays, whatever else you want from me in order to guarantee I can do this...just, please. I insist that I can do this, without Kazama and with the help of my friends I've made here. I'm telling you this is how it's going to go. If you wish to stop helping me, then fine. I'll find a way to make it work for myself. I just thought it'd be better to hear it from me than from Kazamaâ€"whom I'm sure will only exaggerate."

There was another long pause on the other end. Chizuru wasn't sure if her father actually caught everything she said, she was sort of rambling very quickly there, afraid that he was going to try and cut her off again. For the last hour they'd been going back and forth on the same issues. Chizuru understood why he was trying to be so protective, but he couldn't control her life for her, just as she wouldn't let Kazama do any longer.

"Alright." He finally mumbled into the phone. "I'm not happy about this though, just so you know, but I understand. I do, however, expect all that you've just said. Dinners, phone calls and home visits every chance you get. Just because I'm letting you stay there, doesn't mean I still won't try to convince you otherwise."

Chizuru smiled and was just about to tell him how grateful she was for his understandingâ€"as much as he was trying, but he started to cough and gasp on the other end. Instantly she was on alert, her hand tightening on the phone. "Dad...?"

In all her years, she had never once heard her father cough or get ill of anything. When she was young, she'd thought him immune to anything and everything. She knew that was impossible, but she figured that since he was a Doctor, he was help to hide his illnesses very well from her and her brother.

"I'm...fine." he gasped on the other end between coughs. He managed to get them under control, but when he spoke his voice was barely an octave above a whisper. "Really, I'm fine, just a darn cough. I've got to go though."

Chizuru nodded against her phone then stopped when she realized she was on the phone and her father couldn't see her. "Yeah, okay. Love you dad, talk to you later, ok?"

"Of course. Love you too. We'll have dinner next week when I'm around. Your brother will be there too." After that, he said his good-byes and hung up. Chizuru stared at her phone for the longest time, curious and scared at the same time. She was sure it was nothing, but she couldn't stop the fear that had run through her. Chizuru knew her father was no longer a young man, but he wasn't that old either. She knew she'd be able to relax after they came to visit her.

Then, she'd be able to see for herself how her father was doing. Either way, she was going to call her brother and ask him about it later. She couldn't help but fuss about her dad, he was always working so hard and now that both she and her brother were gone, who was looking after him?

Chizuru sighed and pushed the worrisome thoughts away. She did what she sought out to do and now it was on to the next thing. Which, admittedly, she was getting nervous about. Her hands fiddled with the papers Professor Inoue had given her and she paused, trying to gain the confidence she had when she first left her first hour class in the morning.

It was now approaching night time and she had basically been going back and forth about showing up on Okita's front porch. She was sure he wouldn't mind, but what would she say? \_Hey, I just wanted to say...I'm going to leave Kazama. Hey, I can't stop thinking about our mistake kiss...? Hey, I'm pretty sure I'm in love with you...? \_She shook her head with frustration, \_How about, I have your homework from class, Okita...?\_

Chizuru sighed loudly and spun on her heel, tempted to turn and head back to her dorm. Maybe it wasn't such a good idea? The cool air whipped at her face and instantly shook her hesitation and doubt. Why was she worrying? Sen had encouraged her and had faith that Chizuru could pull through with this. She knew she could tell Okita what she felt, she was sure on some level he knew. Just as she knew he felt it for her too.

And so what if he turned her away? It wouldn't change her mind about Kazama. Yeah, it'd hurtâ€”undeniably so, but she wasn't confessing to him so he would feel the same. Of course she hoped he would, but she was doing it for \_herself\_. She didn't want to live with the 'what-ifs.' Chizuru knew she couldn't be with Kazama any longer, not only because she didn't love him anymore but for a lot of other reasons too.

It took a while to figure it out, but she hadn't been in love with Kazama for a while now and it took falling in love with Okita to realize that. She wasn't even sure that what she felt for him had been love, maybe it was infatuation? Comfort? Maybe she was even in love with the idea of falling in love?

Kazama was someone she had known practically all her young life, she didn't know better. She figured that he was what she wanted simply because he knew her so well, it felt natural to graduate from childhood friends to boyfriend/girlfriend. It had always been her dream to be his girlfriend...what had been Kazama's reasons? Chizuru wasn't sure and the fact that he'd never actually explained or tried to express it to her did not go unnoticed.

She was naive about what she thought their relationship was, at least Kazama was right about that. But she wasn't like that any longer. Chizuru now knew that a relationship was not one-sided and that it took two to make it work properly. Kazama controlled too much in their relationship and she had never realized how poisonous it actually was.

Growing up, she didn't make any friends he didn't like, didn't go to any social events he didn't agree to, and definitely didn't go against anything he didn't approve of. If he did something wrong, it was Chizuru who had to apologize for any shortcomings. Chizuru was docile and humble, a doormat essentially. She did anything he asked simply because she figured that was the duty of the girlfriend to do.

Sen had pointed out what she had come to realize as well. Relationships, while not always easy, were not like that. There was suppose to be passion, open communication, and individualism—something Chizuru hadn't known she'd seriously lacked until recently. The lonely nights she'd endured when he'd cancelled on their many dates was such a deep reminder of that.

Okita, on the other hand, was nothing like him. He challenged her, teased her mercilessly, annoyed and intrigued her all at the same time. He made her face flush, heart flutter and set butterflies rampant in her stomach every time he was around. Chizuru didn't think she had ever in a million years be attracted to that kind of guy and yet, here she was, falling fast and hard for him.

It wasn't hard to sneak past the Student Council house and before she realized it, she had climbed up the short steps that lead up the porch and then was standing right in front of their door. The lights were on inside, so she knew that someone was at least there. She was once again nervous, but there was no way she was turning back now that she had come so far.

For a moment or two she debated whether to ring the doorbell or knock. Biting her lip, she reached out and rang the doorbell. Chizuru figured that it was the easiest option and not to mention the loudest. There was no way she could deny that she didn't try if no one answered and she was torn between wanting someone to answer and hoping that no one was home.

It took a while and just when she was going to turn away, the door creaked softly and opened. Already, she could feel her heart start to pound away madly and she mentally went through a quick rambling of what she could say. Hey, Okita! Evening Okita...? What's up, dude? Chizuru grimaced. What's up dude? What the hell is that? \_

Chizuru opened her mouth to say whatever came out first but then hesitated at the person who opened the door, her eyes taking in the new face that was standing in front of her. The guy looked roughly around her and Heisuke's age, around Heisuke's size as well with dark blue messy hair and amber eyes similar to Sanosuke's. Just like the others, he was good looking but his scowl seemed to spoil it. "Yeah?" he asked when she continued to stare, eyeing her suspiciously and cautiously.

"Er, ah..." Chizuru shifted, taking a small step backwards to look at the house. She was at the right place, wasn't she? She noticed the

Greek letters that spelled out the name of their Fraternityâ€”Okita's Fraternity and stepped back. Why hadn't she ever seen this guy before? "Can I see Okita? I have someâ€”"

The blue haired guy stepped out onto the front porch, causing her to stop talking and instead took a quick step back. He quirked an eyebrow, "Now's not a good time." He closed the door a little bit further, but still not all the way shut.

Chizuru could hear mumbles in the background and she wondered what was going on in the house. She didn't think she wouldn't be welcomed...but maybe she should've called first? She pursed her lips and braved a step forward, to which made him scowl even more so, if possible.

"I \_have\_ to see him! It's from our teacher and I need to talk to him. It's \_important\_." She frowned, hating the suspicious way the guy was looking at her. What had she done to earn that? He didn't know her. And why was he keeping her from going inside? Why couldn't she see Okita?

Thoughts flew through her head. Maybe he was sick? He had been out for three days straight, after all. What if it was serious? Her heart started pounding for a whole different reason. "Is he okay?" she blurted, her hands tightening on the papers in her hand.

His amber eyes skipped away from hers for a moment and he looked...uncomfortable? He shook his head, "He's fine." He answered with a shrug. "Butâ€”"

Chizuru pushed forward, eyebrows slamming down. "Please let me pass then!"

"Listen, maybe you didn't hear me clearly, butâ€”"

Chizuru frowned no longer caring what else he had to say. He was wasting her time, so instead she started to quickly push past him since she was small enough to do so, "I'm sorry, but I \_really\_ have to see him! I don't get why you won't just let me in!" She raised her voice purposely, in hopes that Okita, maybe even Heisuke or someone would hear her and come see. Maybe he didn't know that she was a friend?

She managed to get to the door and push the front door open with enough force to make it crack against the wall accidentally. Chizuru was well into the foyer before the guy turned around, caught up to her and grabbed her upper arm in order to stop her. His firm hold on her arm caused her to jerk backwards and lose not only her balance, but her grip on the papers in her hands. All the papers fluttered to the ground in the process and she crashed backwards into the blue haired stranger who just barely managed to keep her upright.

"Hey! Girl! Who do you think you are barging through like that?" He scolded, eyebrows furrowing. "We're having  
â€”"

"Ryunosuke!"

Chizuru glanced over her shoulder at the familiar voice, a smile already on her lips but it quickly faded when she caught sight of



Okita's face. She didn't want to gawk, but she couldn't help it. Okita's face was something she'd never expected to see, though honestly, she thought she'd see him look pale or something...not beat up.

His left eye was swollen and bruised, the skin yellowish and turning a dark shade of purple. It hurt her just to look at it, and his bottom lip was split and puffy on the same side. He wasn't smiling or even smirking at her, but she was sure if he was, it would be very painful. She felt the blue haired guy, Ryunosuke's hands drop from her arm and she automatically raised them to cover her mouth.

Not that it helped, she had gasped pretty loudly when she took in his face—it was hard not to. Other than that, he had a few cuts on the other side with smaller bruises, but nothing as bad as his soon-to-be black eye was and his busted lip. She was sure that his body was also some-what beat up, but she couldn't see anything else.

"I'll take it from here, Ryunosuke. Go back to the meeting."

Okita didn't take his eyes off of her as Ryunosuke walked past them and into the living room where the voices she had heard earlier were quieter than before, but still ongoing. If she wanted to, she could try to hear what they were saying, but that wasn't what was important to her. Okita was important.

Chizuru didn't even notice she had walked up to him until she was pushing up on her tiptoes and reaching for his face. His dark green eyes stared down at her, but it was hard to know what he was feeling with only one eye she could visibly see. Her fingertips were ghosting over his features as she studied him up close, his injuries making her wince.

She frowned, fighting off the urge to tear up. "Oh my...! What happened...?" she finally asked, her voice quivering. Her mind jumped to when she was mugged, had something like that happened to him? It was hard to believe considering she knew how strong he was. The scenarios were only getting worse in her head.

"What are you doing here, Chizuru?"

Well, he hadn't lost his usual attitude, that was for sure. Chizuru felt her eyebrows pinch, "I asked you first," She answered as she watched him closely, intensely.

Okita's expression didn't give much away as he stared down at her. For some reason, even though she felt upset, Chizuru also felt stubborn and didn't back down. He finally sighed and glanced briefly over his shoulder into the living room. "Let's talk over here." He muttered, leading her into the smaller room right by the kitchen and across the hall from the living room, but not before she quickly picked up the papers that had fallen.

The room looked like a den area, decorated with built in shelves that held multiple books—of what genres, she didn't know but she wasn't curious enough to check. The pictures on the walls had previous and current Fraternity members on them, among other things like framed certificates and thank you's from multiple fundraising events. There was an L-shaped couch tucked into the corner with a matching chair

and ottoman.

Chizuru put his homework and notes on the coffee table and stared longingly at the chair with matching ottoman. She wanted nothing more than to sit on the chair, kick up her feet and just not think about Okita's beautiful faced battered. How on earth had it happened? Did she want to know? Instead, she stood and paced in front of Okita. He continued to stare at her and after what felt like minutes, she spun on him.

She was beginning to hate the prolonged silence. What was with him? He was hardly the type to keep quiet for so long. "Are you going to tell me what happened?" she asked in a firm tone. Chizuru was glad that her voice didn't wobble this time, but she wasn't sure if it really mattered at this point. She knew him enough by now to know that he was either going to tell her or not, tears or no tears.

Okita tipped his head back and blew out another sigh. "This is not what I wanted to go through today..." he mumbled under his breath. Being that it was only the two of them and they were just far away enough from the others, she heard him loud and clear. He glanced back down at her and gave her his best crooked grin. It was a little off, but she knew the busted lip was throwing his smile off.

"You know that saying that goes You fight better when angry?" he asked, his voice light and joking. It seemed a bit stiff, but then so did everything else about him at the moment.

Chizuru grimaced, she heard something like that, but she didn't like the sound of it. "Yeah...?"

Okita gave her a simple shrug, "Not true." he answered simply, vaguely.

She stared at him, baffled, annoyed and a little tired of his stupid answers. "Can you just knock it off for like five minutes and just be real with me?" she snapped causing his smirk vanished almost instantly. She was worried about him and he wasn't giving her the courtesy to answer honestly? No, he was just trying to make light of the situation and she didn't see a single thing funny or amusing about it. "I'm worried! I care...!" Chizuru paused as she slowly came to a thought. She wasn't sure why she hadn't thought of it before, but admitingly, she had only recently found out about it.

Quickly, she grabbed hold of his hands and glanced at his knuckles. Sure enough, they were a very dull pink yet and the skin on his hands were still slightly chaffed from the medical tape he usually put on. She frowned and he pulled his hands away from her prying eyes. "Did that happen to you in the Underground?" she asked quietly.

Chizuru couldn't help but feel hurt that he didn't ask her to go or didn't even mention it. She knew it wasn't the right time to feel like that, but she couldn't help it. He had expressed from the start that he had wanted her to attend them all, if not nearly all of his fights. "...did you lose?" she finally asked, glancing up at him.

To her, that would explain the injuries and the added attitude with her. Maybe he had been unsure about the fight from the start and

didn't want her to see him lose? His injuries still looked fresh, so she guessed it happened earlier if not late the previous night. Both times she had texted and he hadn't said anything about it. The hurt was rooting itself deeper.

"You're being awfully pushy," he finally answered. Okita's tone seemed hallow to her as he spoke and she could see the hardness in his eye. She was either right, or he didn't like what she was assuming. "Now I've answered your question. Answer mine."

Chizuru took a step back and couldn't help but cross her arms in a defensive and angry way. Was he trying to make her mad? His sarcastic response was hardly a good enough answer to her question. "Fine." She felt her hands tighten into hard fists. Chizuru wasn't naturally a violent person, nor an angry one, but he was definitely pushing her to the point of where she was reconsidering her disposition.

"Why am I here? I'll tell you." She took a step towards him and pointed angrily at his chest. "I'm here because I wanted to see you! Because I've missed you these past three days! Because I feel like a part of me is missing with you gone! Because I can't stop thinking about our accidental kiss and how much I want to do it again! And because I wanted to tell you in person that I'm breaking up with Kazama because I'm in love with you!"

Chizuru huffed out a shaky breath, her heart racing in her chest at her confession. Half way through her 'because' speech, she started to cry and she furiously swiped at her tears. That was not how she imagined confessing to him, but she did it. She poured her heart out, more or less, and let him know. The ball was in his court now and as she stood in front of him, waiting for his response or even a reaction, she was starting to feel scared.

She hoped this didn't just ruin everything between them and his silence was not at all reassuring. Chizuru glanced up at him and once again tried to brush her tears away, but Okita beat her to it. With his long fingers, he brushed the stray tears from her face and cupped her face in his warm hands. Chizuru stared up at him expectantly, waiting to hear him say somethingâ€"anything. She was just about to open her mouth when he pulled her to him.

Okita's arms wound around her body easily as he pulled her tight to his body, his face instantly burying into her neck. She felt her face flush instantly and only hesitated for a moment before she hugged him back. She wanted to ask him, wanted him to vocalize what he was feeling but couldn't seem to get the words out. And even before she could try, he stopped her.

"Don't say anything," he mumbled against her skin, "Just let me keep holding you like this." He didn't have to tell her twice. So she listened and simply let him hold her tight and close, like she was everything he needed in that single moment. Pressed against him gave her warmth and a sense of instant comfort that was a bit disconcerting. It was only further proof that she loved him, that being in his arms was something she would be constantly craving every moment of every dayâ€"just like his kisses.

Chizuru was feeling awfully brave, having just told him, but still not quite brave enough to attempt to kiss him. Not only that, but she

was afraid to hurt his lips or face on accident. She was surprised he was able to keep his face practically glued to her neck with being in pain. Softly, almost as if she imagined it, she felt his lips press against her neck before pulling her away from him at arms length.

He gave her a sardonic grin, his eye void of any emotion. Like he was trying to hide what he really felt. That was his usual cover, the one that most people didn't bother seeing past but she noticed every time it came up. Chizuru wasn't getting the full effect, considering the other could barely open from a squint. "You shouldn't be in love with a guy like me..." he warned her calmly, almost sadly.

Blinking rapidly, Chizuru fought the tears that were starting to sting her eyes. She knew that rejection was a possibility and she had to face it like the grown up she was. Chizuru would be foolish if she thought that love could easily be returned like one wanted, but at least she didn't have to live with what if's in her life. She nodded softly, ducking her head as she fought the sob that was starting to build up inside her.

"...so that means you don't feel the same?" she asked, her voice flat. Why was she making it more painful for herself by asking? Wasn't his answer good enough? Chizuru pursed her lips, ever the optimist, she knew that his answer was not good enough. It wasn't a clear rejection and she couldn't fight the feeling in her gut that told her he felt something.

"I didn't say that..." His expression was tight, like he was debating saying anything else.

Chizuru stepped closer to him, feeling encouraged by his words and when he didn't step away she reached up and touched his face with her fingertips. Okita tilted his head just a fraction of an inch, into her hand and she smiled up at him. Why was he fighting her on this? He was normally so vocal, so unabashed and yet here he was, practically shy.

"I'm...no good for you." He tried again, his expression pinching but he still didn't move away. Instead, Chizuru moved even closer and pushed up on her tip toes again just as he bend his head down. She watched as Okita shut his eye. "I'm not good at this kind of stuff...I'll end up breaking your heart."

She could see that he really believed that to be so, but the confession only touched her. He didn't have nearly as much confidence in himself as she knew he should on the matter. Chizuru believed in him. More than she had ever believed in anyone before. Her gut was telling her, screaming really, that she was in good hands and that she could trust him with her heart. Chizuru knew that in his hands, they'd be protected.

"No, you won't." Chizuru answered bluntly, her smile growing. Okita's gaze landed on her lips and then back up to her eyes. "I know you like to think you would. Like usual, you don't give yourself enough credit when it comes to being good. But you can't break my heart. You'd never let yourself do it and I believe in you. "

Okita paused, the corner of his lips twitching just slightly. He wanted to be firm, she could see that, but he wasn't trying to fight it very hard. "Are you ever going to listen to me...?"

Chizuru shook her head and before she could lose her courage, she leaned forward and gently pressed her lips to Okita's. Chizuru couldn't deny the empowerment she felt at making the first move, she was hardly ever so bold. The soft, gentle, and brief kiss was unlike their heated kiss from before, but the effects were just as powerful, if not more so.

Chizuru listened as Okita dragged in a sharp intake of air when they parted and before she could even say anything, he reached up and cradled her face in his hands. He didn't waste any time to drag her back to his parted lips. The relief she felt when he kissed her was instant, filling her with a tingling warmth that she could only describe as delight.

The kiss wasn't hard, but it was intense compared to the one mere seconds before, making her legs feel like jelly. She hummed in delight against his lips and he groaned softly in response. Okita furthered the kiss, managing to coax her into deepening the kiss by swiping at her lips with his tongue. When she opened her mouth to him, giving him access, she fought to keep up and loved every second of the sweet torture. She'd never been kissed like that before.

Chizuru couldn't even remember ever enjoying kissing so much as she did, nor when kissing had given her such a responsive feeling. Heat pooled low in her stomach and she wasn't sure what she would've done, or not done, if Okita hadn't taken that exact moment to pull away with a sharp sigh. Chizuru blinked up at him and he gave her an apologetic look.

"What are the odds that we kiss again the day I get my lip fucked up?" he joked, tipping his head to the side. Okita shook his head and stepped back just far enough to give them some space, but still close enough to keep her within his personal space. His hands lowered and rested on the exposed skin of her arms, right above her elbows. Okita's fingers were lazily trailing up and down, making her shiver.

Despite his hands on her arm and their kiss, she frowned and looked at his swollen eye closer. "How bad does it hurt?" she asked softly, resisting the urge to touch it. She also had to resist the urge to get him an ice pack and hold it against the swelling for him. It didn't look nearly as puffy as it could've been.

He shrugged, trying to appear nonchalant but Chizuru knew better. "I've been through worse." Okita admitted.

"Are you going to actually answer my question now?" she asked. Her question, her confession, and her feelings were all laid out before him and he had still yet to address any of it. Okita didn't seem as tense or upset as he was before and she took that as a good sign.

Okita sighed, wincing for a short second before he hid the pain. She wished he would just let himself be okay with showing her pain or when he was hurting—"Chizuru knew he was only human and she couldn't fault him for feeling it.

"Can we talk later?" he asked, glancing over his shoulder. "I've got

a meeting going on and well, it's Fraternity members only. Then we can talk about all of this."

Chizuru pulled away from his touch, hating the cold and emptiness she felt despite him being within her reach. She hated it even more that she felt so hurt by his request. She admitted that she was feeling a little rushed to know his answers and that didn't help. \_Can you make up your mind on one emotion today? \_Her day was not going as planned and she was all over the place emotionally. When was the roller coaster going to stop?

"No." She shook her head and crossed her arms again. Chizuru wasn't usually a selfish person, but she wasn't going to give Okita time to go back on his feelings. She saw how flaky he was acting earlier and she'd be lying if she said she wasn't scared he'd change his mind.

"You listen to me, Souji Okita. I just spilled my heart out to you and you haven't even properly responded to me. For all I know, that kiss was something you'll \_never\_ let yourself do again for whatever stupid reason! I'm \_not\_ going to wait by my cellphone all night or wait and see if your in class tomorrow morning for us to talk! I need to know right now orâ€" She gave him a hard look, "\_Or\_ I'll say something about the Underground...!"

\_You did \_not\_ just say that!\_ Her inner voice was cringing and angry. She wasn't entirely proud of herself in that moment either. If Okita wasn't staring at her with a slightly wide eyed expression, she would've smacked herself on the forehead for her stupid and empty threat. She would never, in her craziest day, ever get Okita or anyone in the Frat in the slightest trouble.

"Are you...\_threatening\_ to expose the Underground if we don't talk?" he asked almost skeptically, but if she wasn't mistaken, his tone sounded amused. "Did I hear that correctly?"

It was the first threat that popped into her head but there was no way she was going to back down now and look like an idiot. So what if she was bluffing? On some level, he had to know she was and maybe that was why he was amused? Regardless, Chizuru still felt embarrassed.

"Yeah..." \_Oh, you are so in for it now. Why don't you save him the trouble of throwing you out and just walk out now?\_ Mentally, she told her bitchy inner voice to take a hike. Her own self loathing was enough at the moment without the added commentary.

Okita chuckled, "That's a serious threat, Chizuru." He tipped his head back and his lips quirked upâ€"not the reaction she would've thought, but it was better than him being angry. "But alright. In order to keep you from exposing us, we can talk now."

Chizuru shifted slightly and nodded, almost frantically before she caught herself. "Yeah." She answered again, waiting for him to continue.

"Which would you like me to address first?" he asked, eyebrow quirking. Instantly she felt herself start to blush and she couldn't help but roll her eyes. Was he planning on milking the whole situation just to make her squirm with embarrassment? If so, it was

going to work...

She spun on her heel so she didn't have to face him and waved her hand at him, "W-whatever pops into your head first!"

"How's your ankle?" Chizuru nearly jumped at the voice by her ear, she glanced over her shoulder and found herself face to face with Okita. She hadn't heard him get close to her again and now her heart was thundering loudly in her chest. His fingers found their way to her hair and his lips were just inches away from hers again. It took her a lot longer than normal to remember that he asked her a question. At the usual smirk, she snapped out of it and cleared her throat.

No kissing until they talked! She lifted her foot up and then balanced on her once bad ankle. "Good." She told him with a small smile. "I've wrapped it everyday until it felt better."

He nodded, "Well, I had a match today." Okita continued to sift his fingers through her loose hair. She normally didn't leave her dorm without doing something with it, but lately she hadn't been too worried about it. Chizuru watched him carefully as he told her about his match and his opponent who managed to get a few hits in. Which to her, seemed like more than just a few. Focusing on the light touches, she managed to listen to his entire story without showing just how horrified it made her.

She didn't like to think about him getting hurt and nearly losing—or like that he felt like he should've lost. In a way, she was grateful for him not having told her about the match, she would've been beside herself through the entire thing. The images she was already conjuring was already setting her on edge.

"I'm not usually that distracted. Damn Hijikata is going to lecture me later about."

\_Hijikata?\_ \_Why is that name so familiar?\_ Chizuru couldn't figure it out, but she didn't dwell on the thought too long as she took in the first part of what he said. "Why were you so distracted?" she asked instead, furrowing her brow. She never would've thought that Okita could ever be distracted during a fight.

"I thought you were done with questions."

Chizuru sighed, lifting her hands up in defeat. "Right, right. Continue."

Okita stared at her for a moment, before continuing. "On a more serious note," He let his fingers slip from her hair, trail down her arms until he took her hand in his. "Let's address the more important topic. Are you sure you want this? Are you sure you want to be with me and leave someone like...\_him\_behind?" Chizuru didn't miss the way he purposely avoided saying Kazama's name, nor how his face seemed to pinch.

She knew how much they each disliked each other, knew how much Kazama disliked Okita, but never really took notice of Okita's reaction. She remembered his hard looks when Kazama randomly showed up, but she didn't really think much of it. Was he jealous those few times? Chizuru couldn't help the small flutter she felt and smiled.

"I wouldn't be here if I wasn't so sure." She gave his hand a squeeze and he returned it easily.

"You do realize it won't be easy, right? I'm notâ€”haven't really been the relationship type of guy."

"Okita, you aren't going to scare me away. After everything I know about you and everything I've seen so far, it's too late."

Okita smiled softly at her, his eye twinkling. "Is it going to ruin my tough guy reputation if I tell you that I love you too?" he asked, brushing her hair off her shoulder with his free hand. "That I'm crazy about you, have been since I first met you and especially so after we kissed? That hearing you even say that to me has turned my week around? Is that cheesy?"

Chizuru shook her head and couldn't help but smile like an idiot. She was sure she was glowing from his words. "No." She leaned into him, beyond happy at the turn of events. Sure it wasn't how she had pictured it, but it worked for them. "I won't tell anyone that Mr. Tough Guy is crazy in love with me, it can be our little secret."

He lowered his head down to her, lips just mere inches away from hers again, practically stealing her breath. "I like secrets, especially when I'm involved." Okita's lips brushed against hers softly and she sighed, her legs already threatening to turn to jelly again. "One last chance to back out...I won't be mad."

Chizuru glared up at him, lips pursed. "Damn it, Okita! Just shut up and kiss me!"

Okita grinned down at her, "Gladly." He murmured before pressing his lips to hers again.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: \*\*\*\*So I hope you like...? Read and Review and let me knooooow! :) Don't worry, more to come soon! Later!\*\*

### 13. Involved

AU. OkitaXChizuru Romance.

\*\*A/n: Another update! Woo! :) Thanks for the follows, for the favorites, and of course for the reviews! Enjoy.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Crazy<strong>

\*\*Chapter 13: Involved\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>So the turn of events had Okita thinking that maybe, <em>just maybe<em>, someone up in the great big sky loved him after all. Why else would they have had Chizuru show up at the house, push her way inside and then tell him she loved his worthless ass?



Well, so not worthless, but really...he wasn't the best option for her. He wanted to tell her that she should give it time before jumping into something else. He wanted to push her away and think of her safety, not to mention, Kazama's threat. He didn't want her caught up in all that was happening, didn't want to see her get hurt. In a way, he was afraid that someone would hurt her, but mostly he was afraid of himself hurting her.

Okita could beat and hurt anyone who would dare harm Chizuru, but if he did it, he wasn't sure he could live with himself. He had been set, practically hell-bent, on staying away from her and making sure she wouldn't be around him ever again. Okita was going to actually drop his morning class the following day, after he spoke about it with Hijikata first, just to make sure he would keep his distance.

He was sure that his bad day was going to get worse when he heard her voice echo from the foyer. Okita had seen the guy's expression and he jumped to get to her first. He wasn't sure why he was so quick to see her and quite possibly make his day worse, but he figured what the hell? Not to mention, he was curious about her arrival.

Seeing her for the first time in three days did nothing to deter the way he felt for her. It was like being pinned down again, the sinking feeling he felt when he nearly lost his match came back full force and he wanted nothing more than to sink to his knees and wrap his arms around her tiny waist to keep her there with him. And when she turned to look at him with her twinkling bright eyes only for them to snap to fear and worry, he wanted to hide his face. That, or go back in time and prevent his stupid ass from doing stupid shit.

He kept steady though, not giving anything he was feeling away. Even when she got into his personal bubble, her scent infiltrating his senses from all directions and making him dizzy in the best possible way, he kept cool. He wanted to push her away, wanted to shoveâ€\_albeit\_ gently, out the door and make sure she stayed away before Kazama realized where she was. He even got to hoping that she'd say something nasty to him to make their impending separation easier. But she didn't.

Okita was glad that he was wrong and was especially glad that he didn't go with his whim to kick her out. He couldn't help that he was happy to hear her say the words he knew he should've been dreading. He couldn't help but give into her expressive brown eyes, or give in to her touches. Hell, he couldn't even help from believing her meaningful words that ultimately melted his tough resolve.

And he was dying to kiss her again, fucked up lip or not.

Almost, just like his earlier fight, messed everything up. Chizuru presented him with plenty of opportunities to turn away from her and just lie about his feelings for her sake. But he just couldn't do it. She was the one good thing about his crazy, messed up life and he just couldn't find it in him to follow through. And he was glad that she basically forced him for his answer because she was right, he would've pushed her away when he came to senses.

How could he not? He didn't want to tell her the truth, didn't want to tell her that Kazama threatened him by using her as bait. Even

now, his mind was going into overdrive due to his new resolve. Okita knew he'd figure something out in order to protect her and to protect the Fraternity. He'd ask for help if he needed to, although, he really hoped he didn't.

Call him a cave man, or possessive, whatever but he wanted to be the one to protect Chizuru. Her only one. And judging by the way her lips moved against his, he was sure she wouldn't mind that too much. Okita had to admit that he rather liked the bold side of Chizuru, felt turned on by it actually. Did she realize how hot it was to have her demand him to kiss her? It was amusing as hell and he liked that she felt comfortable enough to do so.

The whole thing seemed surreal, but Okita could tell as their breaths and tongues mingled, could feel the very truth behind her words and feelings. It was obvious in the way she held onto him, the way she leaned into him for support like her legs could give out any moment. He loved the way Chizuru kissed him, shy and tentative at times with flashes of boldness and forwardness that surprised him and kept him on his toes.

If he weren't so hurt and starting to see dark spots at the edge of his visions from pushing through the pain, he would've shown her the full extent and the full impact kissing could be like. Okita found himself wanting to push her against the wall, devour her mouth that he'd dreamed about, and make her beg for more—"as inappropriate as it seemed, he couldn't help it. He loved her and he'd been waiting far too long for the moment to show her.

"Hey, Okita are you coming back to the—" whoa\_!"

Quickly, Chizuru jumped back from Okita and he resisted the urge to growl at the interruption and pull her back to him. Her lips were swollen from the kissing and her face was flushed prettily, from more than just the kissing thanks to his Fraternity brother. He cut a glance over his shoulder and glared at Shinpachi, whose lips split into a wide Cheshire-like smile. It made Okita want to knock it off his face, but it was at least better than the alternative. It could've been Hijikata standing there, walking in on him kissing the girl he had made such a big deal about just weeks before.

"Didn't mean to interrupt anything." Shinpachi raised his hands in the air, giving Okita a knowing look. "Should I tell the guys you're not coming back or...?" He trailed off, but left little to the imagination when he wiggled his eyebrows at them.

Okita didn't even have to look at Chizuru to know that she was probably squirming with embarrassment. He was about to dismiss Shinpachi when she spoke up, side stepping Okita.

"I actually have to get going anyway..." She ducked her head, a deep scarlet blush staining her cheeks and tips of her ears, but despite that she had a small smile playing on her lips. It gave Okita reassurance, but also made him not want to let her go just yet.

Easily, he reached over and grabbed her hand, successfully making Chizuru stop in her tracks. She gave him a curious look, her face still slightly flushed and he gave her a simple look that said so much. Chizuru's eyes softened and he couldn't even describe the

emotion that washed over him at having her understand what he was trying to say. It spoke volumes of their bond that had strengthened and become something so real in such little time.

She gave his hand a quick squeeze and Okita glanced up at Shinpachi, "I'll be right out. Tell Hijikata not to get his undies in a bunch."

Shinpachi gave a nod, "Sure thing." He stood there for another second longer, giving them both a cheesy grin, before leaving.

Okita shook his head, "Yeah, I would apologize for that...but, he would've been smiling like that even if we \_weren't\_ in the middle of making out." He shrugged and Chizuru laughed.

"You didn't have to do that, you know." Chizuru gave him a smile that seemed to tell him otherwise. He knew that she was actually secretly pleased about it, but she wasn't about to tell him that. Okita had to admit that he liked the fact that she thought she could get away with little quirks like that. "I really do have other things I need to do"so I can swing by later, if you need me to. I had no idea you were having some sort of top secret Frat meeting."

He shrugged, "Eh. So I missed some unimportant topics of discussion, all run by our tyrant Dictator, in order to be with you. I say that's a win." Okita smirked as an idea popped up in his head. He was in no way ready to part with Chizuru just yet. "Why don't you join us instead?"

Chizuru glanced up at him with her wide brown eyes, slightly stunned that he asked her. She blinked, "Oh, uh. Are you sure that's okay? I'm not part of the Fraternity...won't I offend someone?"

Okita grinned down at her and her curious expression turned into a suspicious one. "That's the point." He answered simply, taking hold of her hand he started to pull her along.

"What? Oh, \_no\_"I-I can't!"

He glanced back at her as she tried to pull him to a stop with no avail. It was cute to him to see her try. Okita wrapped his arm around her and pulled her closer to his side, "Shh. It'll be fine. Just stay by my side and don't say anything." He shrugged, "Simple." Chizuru pursed her lips at him and he was tempted to nip at them but already they were across the hall and into the living room.

Okita watched as Chizuru's pout formed into a look of contrite. Her face turned a slight shade of pink, her eyes widened just a fraction and they expressed how sorry she was for intruding on something she knew she had no part of. Okita disliked the look and he turned his gaze to the stunned and now silent room of his fellow Fraternity brothers.

Yeah, of course he knew he was breaking the rule by having Chizuru there. But he was breaking \_all\_ sorts of rules lately, what was one more? He felt Chizuru start to back away from his touch, but he only held onto her tighter. Thankfully, she got the message and stayed glued to his side. Okita grinned at his brothers, sending them each a challenging look.

"Why the silence, guys?" he asked, curiously. Okita made their way to the couch where his spot was still empty. He seated himself and pulled Chizuru right on top of him, his arms winding around her waist to keep her secured. Chizuru gave him a worried look and he just gave her a lopsided smile. "Continue." He urged with a small wave of his hand.

His brothers seemed to still be unsure, uneasy with their newest guest as they all passed wary glances around. Hijikata turned his hard gaze at Okita, his mouth twisted into a scowl that he was sure would've sent Chizuru sprinting towards the door if he hadn't been holding onto her. Instead, she turned towards him and frowned.

"I can go." She whispered to him, practically pleading with her wide eyes. "I can even go wait in your room if you want..." He loved the blush that graced her face when she said that and as tempting as it was, he didn't want to back down now. What kind of message would that say to them? He shook his head.

"Nice try, but you're not going anywhere." He leaned his chin on her shoulder, the side of his face that wasn't beat up in her peripherals. "We have the rest of the night to go up to my room." He whispered. Okita was rewarded with an even brighter blush from Chizuru and she smacked his hand that was starting to rub circles on her lower back.

Hijikata coughed loudly and dragged Okita's attention. "Okita, can Iâ€"

"Nope." Okita cut Hijikata off casually and Chizuru gasped, but slammed her mouth shut. The others around him started to stir, uneasy to the sudden tension that he was causing. "You can talk to me, warn me, whatever all you want Hijikata, but I'm not changing my mind. Chizuru stays here."

"Souji." Hijikata lowered his voice, his tone stern and hard. "You know the rules. You know thatâ€"

Ryunosuke stood up then, his eyes hard and hands fisted at his side. "How is this fair?!" he asked, "Every time we have one of these meetings I have to cancel whatever I have going on with Kosuzu! Why can't she be here with me if Okita's chick can?"

Hijikata glared at him, "I didn't say Okita couldâ€"

"She's not some chick..." Okita grumbled out, giving Ryunosuke a look that promised retribution for the off handed and blase title. Did the kid have no respect?

Heisuke pushed to his feet, his hand going to Ryunosuke's shoulder in an attempt to calm his friend down. Which was good, since Okita was about seconds away from lunging at himâ€"despite Chizuru on his lap. The kid needed to be taught a lesson, not to mention he wouldn't take anyone disrespecting Chizuru like that.

"I can sort of agree with Ryunosuke." Heisuke started, "Not saying she's some 'chick' or anything, Okita. But, well, no offense Chizuru, but Kosuzu is at least part of a Sorority. We can trust her."

"And we can't trust Chizuru?" Okita shot back, glaring at them both. Heisuke's eyebrows furrowed with obvious objection and he opened his mouth to answer but Hijikata raised his hand to stop him.

"\_No.\_" Hijikata answered firmly, glaring down anyone else who wanted to object. "The truth is, we can't and we shouldn't. Not just them, we can't trust anyone outside our group! You never know. They haven't taken an oath, they haven't earned my trust!"

"She isn't going to tattle on us," Okita grunted, "She would've done so before now and you would know. Besides, I trust her. Isn't that good enough?"

Chizuru squirmed and ducked down, trying in vain to make herself seem smaller so she would attract less attention but it wasn't working. In fact, all her squirming was actually dragging a certain part of him to full attention. Before anything disastrous came into effect, he squeezed her in an attempt to still her. "All that squirming is only going to get you into more trouble..." He mumbled teasingly into her ear and she stopped her squirming instantly. Confusion in her eyes, but she didn't question it, thankfully.

Sanosuke sighed, breaking the tension. "How about we just rearrange some of the topics for today," He gave a meaningful look to Hijikata, "Then take it from there."

The silence stretched between them all before Hijikata sat down and waved his hand at them, "Alright." His eyes glared over at Okita, "But we still have a lot more to discuss afterwards." His glare softened some when it shifted to Chizuru, then back to him. "Alone."

"Can't wait." Okita replied dryly.

Yeah, good luck getting me alone.

\* \* \*

><p>Things couldn't have gotten more awkward or tense if she tried. She knew it was going to be weird when she let Okita drag her to his Fraternity meeting, but this was <em>way</em> worse than she imagined. Throughout the start, she was plotting her escape, to keep Okita from getting into trouble or worse, but he seemed to know that's what she was trying to do.

Chizuru wasn't sure what gave her intentions away, she thought she was being inconspicuous, but judging by the arm wound securely around her waist he knew probably of her thoughts before she even thought them. The knowledge that he knew her so well made her insides flutter with warmth—it amazed her how he knew her habits like they were his own.

Even though they still had much to talk about and much to establish between them, she liked that their friendship had become something so meaningful in such a short time. How did she think they could be just mere friends? How had she been so stubborn and blind to her feelings for him? He made it so easy to love him, despite his attitude he was stubborn to keep.

Throughout majority of the conversations, Chizuru tried to keep her

mind busy, tried to appear like she wasn't paying attention even though she sat smack dab in the middle of all the voices speaking. Often times Okita would drag her attention and she felt grateful for the small distraction he provided, but then felt instantly guilty for unintentionally distracting him from the meeting in the process.

It wasn't like she didn't understand why they were hesitant towards her, she understood. Rules were something she definitely understood, but this made Okita calm. She understood that feeling too and with his swollen face still looking painful, she couldn't deny himâ€”didn't want to. Rather, she wanted to coddle him and make sure that his injuries weren't worse than what he was making it seem.

Chizuru made a mental note to talk to one of the other guys who had been at the fight to give her the torrid details that Okita had skipped over. If he wasn't going to give it to her straight, then someone else would. She needed to make sure that he was going to be okay since Okita would only tell her what she wanted to hear.

Her mind continued to drift, as her eyes did. Heisuke was speaking at the moment, talking animatedly with his hands as the blue haired guy, Ryunosuke, beside him nodded in thought. It was obvious now that she looked at himâ€”at them, sitting next to each other, that when Ryunosuke answered the door he reminded her so much of Heisuke. Of course, with a much more anger disposition than Heisuke had, but like him, nonetheless.

His amber eyes seemed to avoid hers and she wasn't sure how she felt about that. Was he angry at her? Angry that they were forced to make an exception for her? She made another note to apologize to him for not only pushing past him when he had tried to warn her about them being busy, but for making things unintentionally tense between him and Okita.

"Hijikata, what's next on the agenda?"

Chizuru's eyes automatically glanced over to the now quiet older man sitting at the far end. His hands were steepled in front of him in a very business like manner and it struck something inside her head. Of course the gesture reminded her of her father, but of something else too.

\_Hijikata...Hijikata...? Isn't that the name of theâ€”?\_ Chizuru bite back the gasp as she remembered back to nearly a year ago when she had first visited the school during her Senior year. The very gesture and posture was nearly the same as when she first saw it back then, when she interviewed to be accepted at the University.

That's where she remembered the name! Why it sounded so familiar! She had only met with him that one time, had seen him perhaps once or twice since then and usually around other faculty members. Her eyes widened as she stared at the \_Dean of Admissions\_, a guy higher up and practically in the back pocket of the Dean of the school, simply sat unperturbed at what they were all openly discussing.

Did the man know? Is that why he was so upset about her presence? Why he didn't trust her or anyone outside their Fraternity? Did the \_Dean\_ know? She had heard that the Dean of the School and the Dean of Admissions were good friends, so naturally he had to know, right?

She wondered how many other higher ups knew about the Underground. Her mind jumped to Inoue and his words from earlier.

Okita caught Chizuru's curious and nervous stare and he leaned over, lowering his voice. "Figured it out?" he asked, slightly amused. "It's fine. He knows, he's in on it." Chizuru nearly gave herself whiplash as she turned wide eyes to him.

"\_What?\_" She bristled slightly as the attention suddenly shifted to them at her slightly loud gasp. She lowered her voice, "How?"

He gave her a wide smile, "Who do you think came up with this whole thing?" he asked, eyes practically gleaming.

She gaped at him and then at Hijikata. He chuckled lowly but Chizuru didn't find it so funny. In fact, she suddenly understood a whole lot more and the weight of the depths of their secrets came down on her shoulders. The fact that Okita trusted her with all that, with \_knowing\_ just who was involved in the Underground and all that, it was crazy. Her involuntarily mind jumped to Kazama.

If he found out any of what she just did, their Fraternity wouldn't just be down, they'd \_burn\_. Chizuru felt slightly sick to her stomach. Had she done the right thing to confess to Okita? Was she putting them all at risk by wanting to be involved with him? She hated to admit it, but she was scared of the secrets the Fraternity hide from everyone.

At the same time, Chizuru was also strangely pleased to be in on the secret. If they really didn't trust her, really didn't want her to know, she wouldn't be there with Okita—despite his words, glares, or threats. His trust in her spoke a lot to the others it seemed and she felt good to have it. They may be wary, but they all knew that Okita didn't trust just anyone. He was a smart man.

Hijikata's eyebrows instantly slammed down, eyes narrowing at them. "Souji, don't go spreading that shit around," He shook his head, "Do you \_want\_ the Underground to be tied to us?"

Okita rolled his eyes, "No one here's a snitch, our secret is safe."

Hijikata's eyes skimmed over Chizuru's and she tried not to feel offended at his scrutiny. She knew what would happen if someone untrustworthy were to find out about them. He had very right to be suspicious. In fact, now she felt embarrassed considering she had threatened to expose him just an hour or so ago...even if she were lying about it, she still threatened.

"D-does Kondo know too?" she asked, curiously.

Okita's eyes softened at the name, a faint smile on his lips as he shook his head, "He knows we're doing something...\_illegal\_, but he doesn't want to know the details and he's not asking questions." The look in his eyes made Chizuru curious all over again, but she figured that they could talk about it later.

"\_Souji!\_" Hijikata snapped, eyes blazing. Chizuru flinched at the tone and shrunk down like a scolded child. Okita simply patted her hands in a comforting gesture, all the while glaring over her

shoulder at Hijikata. "Would you mind keeping your mouth shut?"

"I've already told you, she won't tell anyone." He urged, tone tight and surprisingly level. "She's with me, under my protection, from now on so I suggest you get use to it." Chizuru gave him a puzzled look, not that she wasn't pleased or excited by his words, but why protection?

Judging by the looks on the faces of those familiar, they seemed to understand completely. Each of them had a stern look, one that spoke volumes and it all went right over her head. Heisuke leaned forward, "I think it's time we let Hijikata in on Kazama then."

Sanosuke nodded, "I think it's time we let all of the Fraternity know."

Saito calmly agreed, "It's in her best interests, Okita, as it is for the Fraternity."

Chizuru glanced back at Okita, her curiosity high. His expression was stoic, but his eyes were hard. Immediately her suspicions rose. "What about Kazama?" she asked. Had he done something to the Fraternity? Did he find something to finally use against them? The thought made her feel cold and angry. Why couldn't he just leave them alone?

Hijikata stood and all the attention went to him, "If you all agree on this, then I suppose I have no choice." He looked at Chizuru expectantly, "Yukimura, you must take the oath that we all take."

"An oath?" she echoed and nodded instantly, "Of course, anything!"

Okita sighed behind her, "You don't have to do this, you know..." he mumbled, tipping his head.

Chizuru frowned at him, "I know that. But I want to. If this makes it easier for them to trust me, then I'll gladly do it!" With only a simple shrug of his shoulders, Okita waved at Hijikata to continue.

"Well, technically the rules state that a female cannot be part of a Fraternity, but we aren't necessarily your typical run-of-the-mill Fraternity." He crossed his arms, "You'll be an honorary member, bound to our secrets and rules. You'll be held responsible for keeping the secrets just like everyone else." Hijikata turned and gestured to the empty seat he vacated, "Take a seat."

Chizuru glanced at Okita who gave her an encouraging look before he let her go. With his blessing, she stood and sat in the seat. It wasn't comfy, but that was more so her and how nervous she felt at being the center of attention in a room full of males. Once again, she was reminded of just how intimidating Hijikata was. His handsome face was something else, even when he was partially glaring down at her.

"There's no going back once you take our oath." He warned, eyebrows knitting over his dark violet eyes. "Yes, it's a verbal oath, no



contracts or signatures required but just as ironclad and just as binding. If you think you can turn your back on us, threaten us, endanger to expose us, break a rule, or try to take us down I'll have you expelled from this school so fast you won't know what hit you. Don't test my patience, don't push my limits. That is the one warning you getâ€”just like everyone else." He leaned down towards her, hands placed on the arms of the chair she was seated in. "Even if for one moment in your mind you think you might get away with it, that someone might believe your story, just remember who the authority figure is here. I've been doing this for a long time."

Breathless and more than a little frightened of his words, Chizuru watched as Hijikata slowly stood back up. His gaze was softer now, but they were still hard. She respected him for the seriousness he took in making sure all the guys secrets were safe. "Do you understand?" he asked, looking at her intensely.

Chizuru straightened in her seat and lifted her chin, looking him squarely in the eyes as best as she could. "I understand and accept full responsibility."

Hijikata's lips twitched slightly and so quickly that Chizuru wondered if she imagined it or not. He nodded and brought out his small handbook that he retrieved in the back pocket of his nice dress slacks. Holding it out to her he told her to instructed her to place her hand on the book, similar to how one would do when in the court of law, and had her repeat what he said.

"Seriously, Hijikata?"

Violet eyes turned away from Chizuru to glare at Okita, "It's not like we can initiate her like all of you when you took the oath. This is the next best thing, so I suggest you shut the hell up." Chizuru shifted and gave Okita an encouraging smile before Hijikata turned back to her. "Ready?" he asked.

Chizuru nodded and placed her hand on the pocketbook, which she was sure was the University's Code of Conduct, and straightened. The oath, surprisingly, was short and to the point. She was able to repeat most of it without Hijikata having to help and she felt immensely proud of herself. She never thought she'd ever want to join a Sorority, or Fraternity in this case, and even though she was only an honorary member, the feeling that bubbled up inside her to be a part of something was nearly overwhelming.

"Welcome to the Shinsengumi-Sigma Fraternity, Chizuru Yukimura." Hijikata stepped to the side and waved his arm towards her, "Brothers, welcome your new honorary sister."

Tentatively, Chizuru looked up at each face that was part of the Fraternity. They stared at her, expressions mixed from acceptance to wariness. She understood the hesitation. She pushed herself to her feet and bowed in front of them.

"Thank you." She couldn't stop her heart from racing. "I won't let you guys down!" Chizuru stayed in her bow until she heard clapping. She hadn't seen who started it, but she had a very strong feeling it came from Okita. Slowly she glanced up and the room one by one broke out into applause. The soft applause morphed into a loud one with

hoots that could've rivaled the Underground.

Hijikata's hand came down softly on her shoulder and Chizuru straightened up, beaming at them all for their welcome. Her eyes went right to Okita who was looking at her with such pride and warmth that it took everything in her not to jump across the room and leap into his arms. Instead she stayed rooted until Hijikata calmed the room down.

Chizuru took the moment to sit back down in her own spot as Hijikata held the floor. "Now that that's done and out of the way." He looked at Heisuke, "We can go onto the next thing we need to discuss. Tell us about Kazama."

\_That's right!\_ In her pure happiness, she had completely forgotten about Kazama. She frowned and tried to catch Okita's eye, but he was too busy staring hard at Heisuke. She couldn't read his expression from the short distance between them, but she knew it wasn't a good one.

Heisuke gave a brief nod and stood up, "Kazama is right on our heels," He ran a hand through his hair, "That's not new, he's always right behind us, but this time he made it personal." Heisuke turned away from Okita's piercing glare and Okita tsked under his breath. The small exchange between the two didn't go unnoticed by anyone. "Two days ago he came by and threatened Souji."

The guys around them started to chuckle, but when Heisuke or Okita—"as well as Saito, Sanosuke and Shinpachi, she noticed—"didn't, they all became silent again. Ryunosuke shook his head, his face twisting into a confused look.

"I don't get it. So what?" he threw his hands up, "Okita can handle him no problem. So what's the deal?"

Heisuke's eyes briefly flickered to Chizuru and she felt dread start to churn in her lower stomach. Once again, the small look didn't go unnoticed by the guys. At Heisuke's unease, the dread started to build and spread throughout her in an icy, queasy feeling and something else. Something that strangely felt like anger...

"He threatened Chizuru to get to Okita." He finally mumbled.

"He \_what?!\_" Chizuru didn't even realize she yelled or even stood up until all eyes were on her again. She glanced at Okita, eyes wide. "Tell me \_everything.\_" She demanded in a low, shaky voice. She had figured Kazama to be a sneaky one, but to do that? To threaten? Wasn't he always going on and on about doing things on the straight and narrow?

And yet, she wasn't all that surprised. He had basically threatened her as well, by using her father against her just so he could get what he wanted. How had she been so blind about him before? Okita sighed, "Kazama threatened that if I didn't stay away from you, he'd tell everyone and anyone that you are involved with the Underground. You'd take the fall."

"And we \_all\_ knew that if you took the fall, Okita would step in and fess up the truth." Sanosuke added, shaking his head. "That would lead to a strike against us, no fighter, no fights, and ultimately

the demise of the Underground."

"That would also mark you as a target to anyone of Okita's enemies." Heisuke sighed, eyes hard and angry. "Kazama saw enough to know that this threat was a big deal."

As Chizuru stood, absorbing everything they were telling her, the room around her started to buzz with shouts and curses. Her hands trembled and anger flared through her. The gull of Kazama! The fact that she ever thought she loved him made her sick! She thought he was good, she thought she knew him so well...

"Can we trust her?"

"What can we even do now? She's part of the Frat, we're fucked!"

"Well maybe we canâ€"

Okita stood up, "Keep talking like that and I swear I'llâ€"

Hijikata moved himself in between Okita and some of the brothers that had spoken. "Enough!" he shouted out, eyes narrowing on everyone. He waited until Okita sat back down with a huff before he moved. "We can trust her. She has taken the damn oath and is under our protection now. We look after our own, \_don't forget that\_." He glared at the guys from before. "Now, we need to discuss this problem before it gets too out of control andâ€"

Chizuru stepped towards Hijikata, "I can talk to him." she told him, the anger still gnawing at her to be set free. And she intended to set it free.

Hijikata frowned and shook his head at her, but before he could say something Okita was on his feet and right by her side. "Absolutely not."

She glared at them both, "Why?" she stepped out from Okita's touch, causing his eyes to darken at the brush off. She felt bad for denying him, but she couldn't let herself sink into that comfort or else she knew she'd give in. Chizuru felt strongly about this. "He might listen to me, he might not. But it's worth a shot, don't you think?"

"Chizuru," Okita shook his head and turned away from her.

"You're right. He may or may \_not\_ listen to you. But, Chizuru, he's a man who could easily and without remorse threaten his own girlfriend and risk her safety just to get his way. You can understand our hesitation." Hijikata glanced at a pacing Okita, "There's no way we're going to put you through that."

"At this point do we really have a choice?" she asked, "This could work and then we wouldn't have to put \_all of you\_ at risk. I can handle Kazama, have been for years. Besides, I need to talk to him anyway. Why not now? When he's not expecting it?"

"She \_has\_ been dating him for a really long time..." Heisuke mumbled from the back ground. "Maybe she has a point andâ€" Heisuke cut

himself off at Okita's warning glare.

Chizuru rolled her eyes, "Just...give me five minutes. If it's a no go after that, we dismiss it and try to handle this another way, but it's worth trying!" She urged.

Okita scoffed, "He deserves shit."

She turned and crossed her arms as she held her ground, "I either do it now or I'll do it laterâ€"with or without you. So which will it be?" Chizuru glared at him, letting her anger out just a little bit so she stayed strong. Hijikata only nodded which seemed to spark the anger in Okita's deep emerald eyes more.

"Fine." He bit out. "But I'm staying with you the entire time and we have Sano and Shinpachi there as back up."

Chizuru nodded, relaxing somewhat. "He won't hurt me." She told him.

"It's not for him." he told her simply, his jaw twitching as he turned away from her. Sanosuke and Shinpachi were already on their feet and ready.

With that, Chizuru gave a small nod to Hijikata and the others as she followed Okita, Sanosuke and Shinpachi out. The night air had turned even cooler and she shivered slightly as she hurried up to Okita. He still wasn't really paying any attention to her and she tried not to let it waver her determination. He was just throwing a temper tantrum for not having his way.

Chizuru knew that he wanted nothing more than for her to back down and not face Kazama. If it were up to him, he'd shield her from all of it and she'd break up with him via text. Well, she was sure it would be easier to do that through text, but they had been together much too long to break up that way. She at least owed it to him to say it to his faceâ€"among \_other\_ things.

They reached the door in a matter of seconds and Chizuru hesitated only slightly. She glanced at Sanosuke and Shinpachi, "I think you guys should stay here," At Okita's stern look she added, "For now at least."

"Chizuru, they come."

She pursed her lips, "First of all, I'm not giving him any heads up. I'm not even going to knock, I'm just going in and I don't need an entire entourage tipping off his two right-hand men. I don't want there to be a fight, that's what we're trying to avoid. If you can't behave yourself, then I'm going to have to ask for Sanosuke or Shinpachi to accompany me."

If she thought Okita's eyes couldn't get any darker, then she was very wrong. Very, very wrong. His eyes practically cut through her with their intensity, but she didn't even flinch. She did, however want to throw herself in his arms and plead for him to understand her, but she didn't. Chizuru wanted Okita to see that she wasn't all that fragile or frail.

If Chizuru learned anything from her relationship with Kazama was

that she was done letting someone else control her life. She stepped towards him, reached up and placed her hand on the uninjured side of his face. Finally, his eyes softened but not by much. "I want you to be there by my side when I do this, Okita. Having you there will give me strength, but I don't want you to fight. I know you'll only regret putting your hands on him, no matter how justified you are. It'll be exactly what he's hoping for and I \_won't\_ let him win."

For a moment he only stared at her, eyes locked on her as his jaw worked back and forth as he went over her words. Chizuru knew she had him, but also knew that he was purposely dawdlingâ€”probably hoping to find words that change her mind. It was a futile effort, but he wouldn't be Okita otherwise.

Realizing he was in a losing battle, he gave in. Slowly, he lifted his hand up to caress hers that was still on his face. He turned his head slightly and brought her palm to his lips, placing a soft kiss. "Alright." He finally mumbled against her hand. "You drive a hard bargain, so right beside you it is then."

Chizuru felt pride swell inside her and she tried not to show it too much. Later, when things weren't so tense, she'd brag about the win. "Thank you."

Okita laced his fingers with hers, "Let's just get this over with," he told her, "The sooner I can get you away from him, the better."

"If you two lovebirds are done," Shinpachi crossed his arms and quirked an eyebrow, "Then we'll wait here like Chizuru mentioned."

"Actually, I'll circle around back. Check around, just in case." Sanosuke nodded to them, "Shinpachi will text me if something goes down before I'm back."

"Alright."

Sanosuke paused before he left, "And Okita, like stated before so eloquently by Chizuru, behavior yourself." He gave him a knowing look that had Okita press his lips together with annoyance. "If there's any chance you think you won't be able to handle it, tell us \_now\_ before it's too late."

Okita's hard look was back, but thankfully it wasn't directed at Chizuru. She wasn't sure if it was any better being directed towards Sanosuke at the moment. His angry expressionâ€”furrowed brows, hard glare and thin-tight lipsâ€”quickly morphed into the most stoic expression she'd seen to date. Somehow, it was far more intimidating than his anger.

"I'll be fine."

With that, Sanosuke only nodded and went off. Shinpachi waved them forward and Chizuru went ahead and opened the door. Silence met her as she and Okita stepped into the grand foyer that she'd yet to see since she started school. Like expected, the foyer was elegant and had that certain feeling of importance.

Unlike how she expected, the further they moved in, the more warm and

inviting it seemed to get. She had almost expected everything to be cold and very pristine, like a museum rather than a place that housed several people. But in a way, it felt similar to the Frat next door. There were things, albeit a few, that were out of place like cups without coasters, or shoes out of place here and there that gave an idea that there were, indeed, people who lived there.

Chizuru felt Okita's fingers gently brush the small of her back, gesturing her to go the stairs. It didn't seem like anyone was on the first floor. If anything, Chizuru figured that Kazama was probably in a meeting of sorts if not in his room studying or something. Following his quiet gesture, she went up the stairs as quickly and quietly as she could.

Each time her foot caused the wood to creak under her feet, she winced and felt her heart start to beat erratically. Secretly, she was strangely thrilled over sneaking about right under Kazama's nose—like a cool cop ready to get the jump on their bad guy. Which he was, in this scenario in her mind. She was going to confront Kazama about all the bad things he'd done.

Reaching the second floor, she listened quietly for any sounds and heard soft mumblings coming from down the hall but not much else. She pointed down the hall in the direction of which she hoped was Kazama's room. He hadn't told her much about his room other than he had one. Okita gave her a firm nod and they both continued on.

The mumbling grew louder as they reached the door and Chizuru felt her heart rate spike. What if that wasn't his room? What if she barged in on some unsuspected soul doing god knows what? She hesitated and glanced at Okita, silently asking for support. He caught her look and gave her an amused glance, telling her how silly she was being for basically tripping at the finish line. At least, she was sure that was what his look told her.

Okita extended his hand and pointed at the top of the door to nearly faded, from time, to scrawling but elegant scribbles. Presidential Suite. Chizuru nearly rolled her eyes but felt the confidence come back. She felt Okita's hands trail up her arm before coming to a rest firmly on her shoulder. This time she knew exactly what he was telling her. You got this.

"Hey."

Immediately Chizuru backed away from the door as her head snapped in the direction of the loud voice. Okita quickly shifted in front of her, automatic, not that they were in any real danger. Amagiri, one of Kazama's right hand man she'd met on her first day was at the end of the hall. His serious face was stoic, as usual, but his eyebrows were pulled down slightly.

"I see you've made a full recovery." He noted, mostly to himself but the hallway carried his voice well. "What are you doing in here?" he finally rumbled out in that booming voice of his. To the silence around them, his voice seemed obnoxiously loud and made Chizuru wince. "This is a private residence."

Chizuru stepped slightly out from behind Okita, "I'm here to see Kazama." She told him firmly.

His eyes skipped back over to her, "He's not seeing anyone tonight, unfortunately."

Amagiri took a step towards the door and Okita stepped towards him. Instantly the two stopped and leveled each other with glares. Chizuru wasn't sure whose was more intimidating at the moment. Amagiri always had a certain look that made everything he didâ€"even smilingâ€"look menacing, while Okita...well, his carried a weight to his glare that always promised pain.

"You aren't getting anywhere near that door, or her." Okita warned in a low voice.

"Trust me, you don't want to do this." A look flashed over his eyes, one that Chizuru couldn't make out, but Okita didn't budge from his spot. Instead, his face just darkened with challenge at Amagiriâ€"basically daring him to get past him. With one hand, Okita waved Chizuru to go to the door.

Taking the cue, Chizuru stepped back towards the door again, ignoring the rustle of the two as Amagiri made a move. Amagiri was trying to place himself in front of Kazama's door, but the question was why? Surely he could put studying off for a moment or two. Put whatever he was doing on hold until she talked to him.

Quickly she pushed open the door and rushed into the room right as she heard Amagiri try and muscle his way past Okita who started cursing in a very loud voice. She only glanced back at them briefly, just to make sure that Okita was okay. He was still shaky from his fight, but he was still standing and holding Amagiri off rather well.

For a moment, Chizuru felt successful for not only getting past one person, but two in one day. In a way, she felt powerful and capable. She wasn't going to take 'no' for an answer anymore. For a moment, just the tiniest, she had forgotten why she had burst into the room until a rather loud gasp forced her eyes to the sound.

They landed on Kazama...who wasn't alone as she had previously thought he'd be. Suddenly she understood Amagiri's words. But in whose interest was he acting for? She was certain it wasn't for her.

Chizuru couldn't help but stare at Kazama as he quickly started to pull his underwear, then pants back up and the girl who was with him was pulling her skirt back into place just as fast. She blinked at the scene, unsure if she was really seeing it or if it was some sort of figment of her imagination. Why she thought it could be that, she had no idea. A part of her mind tried to rationalize that it was because she hadn't see that coming. She didn't want to believe that she had been stupid enough to not know.

She'd never thought for a moment, even in their lowest point, that Kazama was cheating on her. She knew he was a jerk, a privileged asshole with control problems, but this? Well...she wasn't sure how to handle this. When Kazama had finally straightened, buttoned, and zipped his pants into place he turned towards her.

His face was slightly flushed, hair a little ragged and eyes slightly wide. Even from her position close to the door she could smell the

overpowering flowery perfume coming off of him. The scent reeked and she resisted the urge to plug her nose. Chizuru noticed, right before the girl quickly fled the room, that she had been just as ruffled and flushed as Kazama, probably more so from being caughtâ€"not that Chizuru had seen much. She was sure that Amagiri's loud voice had saved them all from the worst of it. But there was no doubt about what had happened or what was about to. She'd seen enough.

"Chizuruâ€"! What are youâ€"" He patted his jeans and then started fixing his hair, as if that were the one thing she was going to call him out on. "I can explain and, you see I wasâ€""

His voice trailed off when his eyes skipped over her shoulder. Instantly his dark eyes narrowed and his lips pressed into a tight line of anger and annoyance. His darkened eyes cut back to her and the accusing look she saw in his eyes completely shocked her. She didn't have to turn around to know that Okita stood in the doorway, right behind her like promised.

Who the hell does this ass think he is?! \_

"I'm breaking up with you." She told him easily, eagerly if she were being accurate.

Kazama's eyes flared, "Are you now?" he asked, voice tight. "For that nobody trash? Hm? Do you think he'll stay interested in you for long?" Kazama shook his head, "I knew you were fucking him, Chizuru, but to actually break up with me so you can 'be with him'? It's ridiculous!"

Chizuru wasn't quite sure what possessed her in that very moment, but when Kazama had looked down at her with that accusatory glare after claiming that she was the one sleeping around, once again like it was all her fault, well...she couldn't hold her anger in anymore. She didn't think it through nor did she think of the consequences, instead she lunged forward with her raised, balled up fist and hit his nose right on the mark. She'd remembered seeing Okita do something similar to that, though she was sure hers had been way more sloppy.

The crack and grunt of pain she heard come from Kazama felt good, so good that she didn't even think about the pain her knuckles were causing her. He hadn't been expecting that kind of retaliation and the thought had her smiling and practically giddy. Hands pressed against his bleeding nose, he glanced up at her with his eyes blazing and still looking at her like she owed him an apology.

Did he really think she didn't know or didn't understand what was going on with him and that girl? Or that she didn't know what he'd said to Okita before he'd gone and threatened her later the same day? Did he really think she was that unaware and stupid?! The nerve! She was more than ready to go after him again, but didn't even get the chance again before she felt Okita's arms wind around her waist and lift her up and away from the bastard.

"Okita's twice the man you'll ever be! Let me at that fuck!" She all but growled, "You lying, piece of shitâ€"! You're ridiculous! You are justâ€"ugh!" Chizuru didn't notice how much she was struggling against Okita's hold and shouting obscenities until he whispered low



in her ear.

"It's alright. \_It's alright\_." He soothed quickly, curving his body perfectly against hers. "It's just me, calm down. You got him, baby. You got him good."

"Calm down...right." She huffed and sighed, letting her arms fall to her sides rather than continue to claw at Okita to be released. Chizuru let herself lean back against Okita's firm and warm body, her rage started to dissipate rather quickly, leaving behind an ache that had her huffing for a whole other reason.

Her hand was starting to hurt like hell, not to mention was already starting to swell. Chizuru whimpered softly as she tried not to flex her fingers more than she naturally had to. It was also hard not to let any tears of pain out. She didn't want Kazama, or Okita, to think she was crying over him. But \_wow!\_ She wished someone had told her punching someone \_hurt!\_

"We need to go." Okita finally mumbled, setting her down. In a stroke of brilliance, Okita had carried her out to the hallway, just a few feet away from Kazama's open door. Chizuru could hear Kazama yelling in his room at Amagiri and someone else, anger evident in his voice and she winced. What had she done? She had gone to there to yell at him and break up with him, sure, but also to \_reason\_ with him.

She was pretty sure she just made things worse...

\_Way to go.\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>An: Yesssss. :) So, finally got around to actually outlining the rest of this story and if all goes well, there should be 25 Chapters \_total\_. Woo! Can't wait for you awesome readers to read it! (You know...once I get to writing it out and posting...) Anyway, please review and tell me what you think! As always it's appreciated, it's encouraged and I look forward to it. :) Thank you everyone! \*\*

End  
file.